



GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE

Bilingual-monthly publication of political analysis

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

The final negotiations for the new map of world power are beginning

Vladimir Putin. A tsar democratically elected

The Middle East or peace as business

Tensions between the U.S.A. and China

A dilemma of the modern intelligence services

Recommended Reading:

The reunification (realities,
costs, benefices)

Special contributions (in alphabetical order)



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A talented politician who probably did not find the best juncture in order to advance further on a national and European level.



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Publications. Books: *The Construction of the European Union*. Bucharest: Ed.C.H.Beck, 2009. *Gender Politics*. Bucharest: Ed. Maiko, 2004. *Individual Freedom and Political Manipulation*. Bucharest: Politeia-SNSPA, 2003. Founder and Editor-in-Chief of the *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* (since 2001).

Special contributions (in alphabetical order)



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Political analyst on East-European affairs, especially of the former Soviet republics and the CIS, specialized in political issues, ethnic conflicts and energy resources. Senior fellow at the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies in Washington, author of numerous articles and works published in Wall Street Journal, and other prestigious publications. He is frequently a guest lecturer at Harvard University - National Security program at Kennedy School of Government and a member of the Euro-Atlantic Security Study Group.



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He teaches contemporary history, international relations and negotiations. He worked as a diplomat in New York and Washington D.C., and then was a member of the Government and chief negotiator for the Romanian membership to the European Union, Chief of the European Affairs Department in the Romanian Government, member of the parliament. He is a consultant for several Romanian and foreign companies, and the author of numerous books. He is a board member in many international expert organizations, he teaches at prestigious institutions of superior education abroad.



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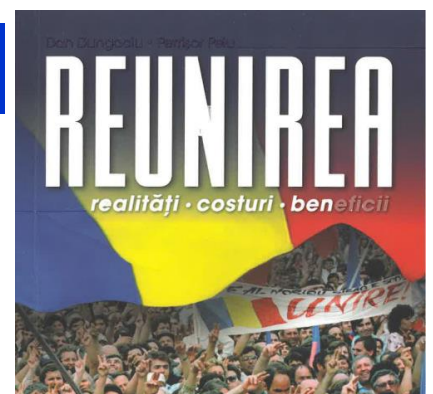
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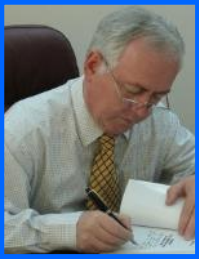


Motto: "Opinions are free, but not mandatory"—I.L.Caragiale

EDITORIAL

"Fake news" - "everything changes since nothing changes"

Corneliu PIVARIU



Fake news (FN) was The Word of the Year 2017 (according to Collins Dictionary), a term which was not to much in use two years ago. Nonetheless, the governments and influential people used the information as weapon thousands of years ago for maintaining and enforcing their power as well as for weakening their opponents/competitors. The example used often for illustrating the term dates back to the Roman period, when Octavian used a disinformation campaign for defeating Mark Antony (who eventually committed suicide).

In the XXth century, when new forms of mass communication permitted carrying out much more extended disinformation and manipulation operations, especially during war time and the most notable example in this respect is the Fascist regime in Germany.

There are several definitions of FN, yet there is none internationally accepted (if one din't succeed in defining terrorism, how could have FN been defined?), and there are different estimations concerning the importance and the effects of FN as well as the actions to be taken for limiting the FN negative consequences in the society. We underline the deliberate character of FN. Furthermore, FN is in strong correlation with another term in vogue, *post-truth* (The Word of The Year 2016, according to Oxford Dictionary - see the editorial in Strategic Pulse No. 232/05.03.2017), and the FN relevance increased in the post-truth politics.

A Freedom House research covering 65 countries that pay pro-government commentators shows that the number of countries paying for FN increased gradually from 20 countries in 2013 to 30 countries in 2017. The government-run interference in on-line media (in the same number of 65 analyzed countries) led to the expansion of governmental media in 33 countries while FN about the elections was contested in 16 countries and 10 countries practice the electronic identity theft.

In general, one witnesses a decline of public trust in mainstream media while the trust in on-line media evolves differently (increases or decreases) due to factors pertaining in general to education, culture, freedom of expression, etc.

Before the emergence of Internet, the process of disseminating information and, implicitly, FN was much more costly, as earning the trust of a certain public could last several years and media regulation or selfregulation was much easier. The growth of social media eliminated many of the limits preventing the FN dissemination within democratic regimes, the financial field included. Practically, everyone can create and disseminate data. Facebook and Twitter (with 2 billion and, respectively, 330 million users) allow an exchange of information in real time and on a scale that could not have been even anticipated in the past, while platforms such as WordPress permit anyone to easily create a dynamic site. In fact, barriers to disseminating FN are almost nonexistent. Yet, if it is relatively easily to measure the FN disseminating capacity, it is difficult to appreciate its influence. The multitude of data and information that are conveyed makes its filtering by a common citizen more and more difficult and who is, most of the times, confused by data's rapidity, multitude and diversity as he is bombarded with and doesn't know what to believe. It is the situation in which he acts in accordance with his own misconceptions (which, in their turn, can be shaped over time).

One of the FN most recent examples is the dissemination, by Syrian media and the Russian trolls, (an activity that increased by 2,000% within the first 24 hours after the April 14th attack on chemical facilities in Syria) in accordance to whom 17 or 71 (see the figures game intended to induce doubts) missiles launched by the allies were intercepted. In fact, no interception took place.

The history's wheel continues to revolve, time is pressing us and the danger of mistaking the reality with one's own wisher or with a FN induced reality is ever bigger. Since the battle between the Hittites and Egyptians, in the XIIIth century B.C., and until today "everything changes since nothing changes".

22ND - 23RD
MAY 2018

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION IN THE AIR FORCE

ORGANIZED BY 'HENRI COANDA' AIR FORCE ACADEMY, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE AND THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION



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THE 20TH EDITION



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TRANSILVANIA UNIVERSITY OF BRASOV AND WITH 'GL. M.R. STEFANIK' ARMED FORCES ACADEMY, SLOVAKIA

22ND - 23RD MAY 2018

'HENRI COANDA' AIR FORCE ACADEMY, 160 MIHAI VITEAZU ST., BRASOV

TUESDAY, 22ND MAY 2018

10.00

OFFICIAL OPENING

PLENARY SESSION:

ANTONIA COLIBĂȘANU, PhD, analyst,
Geopolitical Futures, Austin, Texas, SUA

ANIS H. BAJREKTAREVIC, PhD,
professor, Institute for
Modern Political History Analyses, Viena

18.00

OFFICIAL DINNER

SPONSORS:

PARTNERS: PRIMĂRIA MUNICIPIULUI BRAȘOV CONSILIUL JUDEȚEAN BRAȘOV GPF GEOPOLITICAL FUTURES

MEDIA PARTNERS: TRIBUNA DE PRESĂ AL MINISTERULUI APĂRĂRII NAȚIONALE

WEDNESDAY, 23RD MAY 2018

8.00

PARALLEL PANELS:

- A) SECURITY, STRATEGY, GEOPOLITICS & CYBERDEFENCE
- B) ENGINEERING SCIENCES
- C) APPLIED MATHEMATICS, COMPUTER SCIENCES
- D) MANAGEMENT & SOCIO-HUMANITIES

E) WORKSHOPS

18.00

CONCERT, THE COUNCIL SQUARE



The Current Geostrategic World-wide Outlook



The new equation of global power: Putin&Comp are standing by

Cristian UNTEANU

The re-election of Vladimir Putin has completed the group of the super powers representatives that will go in the near future into the final process redrawing the map of global power and influence, redistributing countries for a reasonable period of time, following the Yalta model.

The US, China, Russia and the EU enter into this competition, ready to take any ulterior course of action, whether it will be just negotiations or post-conflict negotiations. Each of the players knows that changing the current system of international relations is absolutely inevitable precisely because the sequence of events in recent years proves that the mechanisms emerged after the Second World War are now outdated and increasingly ignored by states seeking for new, safer and more profitable alliances.

The first stage of the game is about to end. It is about the years in which each of the four actors has presented and implemented new forms of power, based on which they will enter the next stage.

China, the new big global player, has announced its vision of global economic expansion covering a vast area of the planet with two great belts, on land and at sea, included in the New Silk Road. And precisely because the project is huge, it covers it in terms of political predictability and investments, with guarantees of the concentration of power in the hands of one person, the Great Leader, following the model of Mao.

Russia continues in the line of force imposed by Putin, fully using the weapon of

energy resources, developing a very ambitious policy of implantation in new territories, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, placing new military bases in the eastern limit of the Chinese expansion and in close proximity to NATO lines by maintaining constant pressure by supporting outbreaks of conflict that are “frozen wars” and investing enormous resources in weapons programs.

The political, military and security lines in the US are changing, bringing forward a hard line and obviously much devoted to President Trump and to his policies especially in the economic field, where, under the electoral promise of protecting the national market, a process that may turn into a specific global trade war has begun. For now, everything is in favor of the US, the stock exchanges and companies being on an ascending slope, while Trump wants to make the most of this advantage probably associated with negotiating on the delivery to the older or newer allies of some of the exceptional “technological packages” of the Americans.

The European Union also entered an interesting offensive, relatively late, because the situation in Germany needed to be clarified by form-





ing a new coalition government. Immediately after that, the Franco-German engine has gone back to its cruising speed. Macron and Merkel said there would be very soon discussions on major changes in the European project focused on the “hard center” where the strategic decisions are to be developed. The EU has on its side the huge potential of its common market and of an interesting geographical position, the final line for the strategic transport network of goods and hydrocarbons coming from the east or the west...but also with its own backup of technology patents, usable for the military industry and the civil area.

There are four actors who are fighting for market territories, areas of political influence, obsessed with forming belts of safety that would guarantee their supply routes. And again, they are eager to form a political clientele as stable as possible and predictable in the countries with significance at least by geographic location, territories usually under a semi-permanent conflict state that have populations in a state of chronic underdevelopment.

The question is not whether change will occur, but what formula will lead to the changes. This is the question now; this is the profound meaning of tensions and threats occur-

ring on the markets. This happens while negotiators have been sitting for some time at the table, on their chairs, or simply standing near walls or in the next door rooms, patiently waiting for the players that will put the final decision into practice. Whether it will come only after discussions or will be the final conclusion of a conflict, remains to be seen. Nevertheless, each of the four players has aligned all the pieces in a fighting mode.

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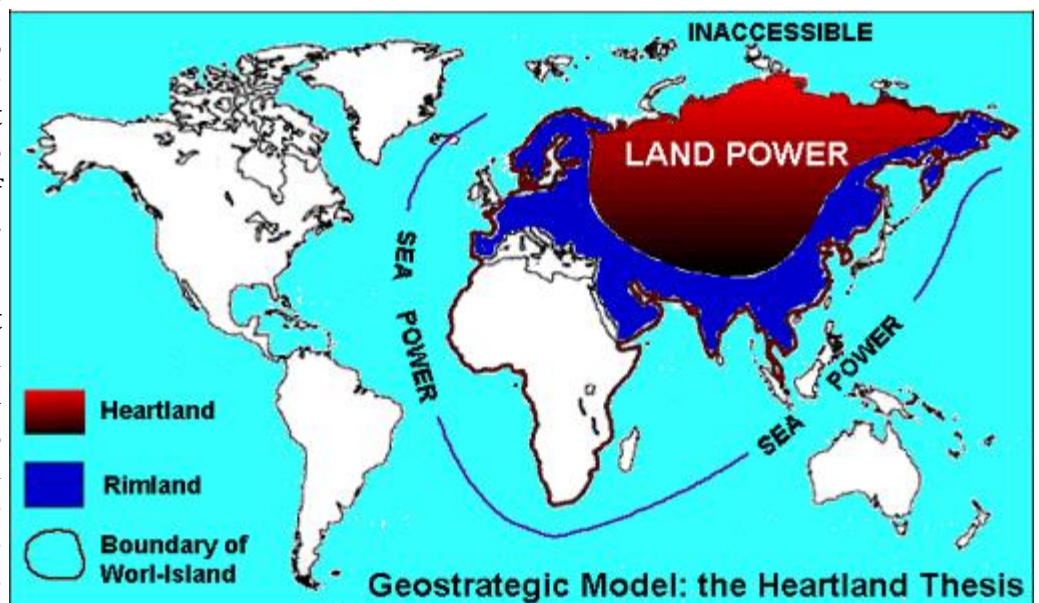
The final negotiations for the new map of world power are beginning



Cristian UNTEANU

Let us go 100 years back in time. At that time, the British geographer

Halford John Makinder was summarizing his theory about the “Heartland”, which would then decisively influence successive schools of politicians and would shape the worldview of political and military leaders and, as it can be noted, it has remained valid in what concerns the huge battle to reshape the map of the world power.



This was the central message:

the opposing forces, whether it was about the



British, the Soviets and now, the international coalition, Romania including.

Russia's historic ambition was to reach the Ocean and, through the Bosphorus, the Mediterranean. The dream has been unattainable for centuries, but got almost achievable through the agreements that led to a strategic closeness to Turkey and Iran, securing now

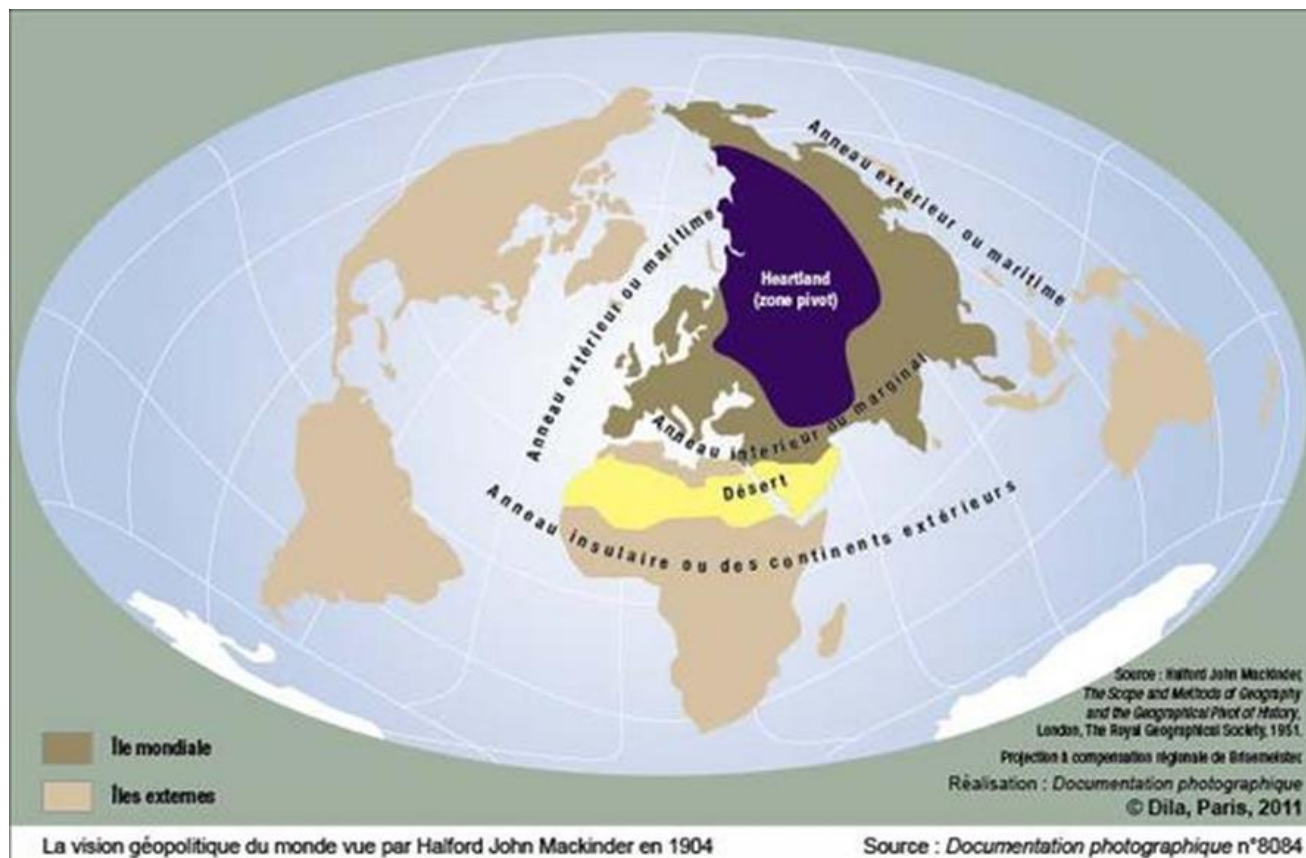
a region having at the center the unhappy Syria. The strategists of the three recently allied countries (Russia-Turkey-Iran) have grasped at the right time the truth contained in the appellation that has accompanied Damascus for millennia "the place where all the eastern roads lead to". The region quickly becomes unbalanced in favor of the new pole of power in the old area of western US in particular influence, which means that the Saudi Arabia-Israel alliance axis remains, an ad-hoc alliance that regards the security of what has remained true in the Gulf and possibly redirecting everything into a US-backed offensive against Iran, disavowed by the Europeans...

Putin's new era of power coincides, not accidentally at all, with the Kremlin's messages of urgent opening of negotiations. Obviously, there is a message from Trump too, who would accommodate a revival of the old Russian-American agreements, primarily in the area of arms control and obtaining guarantees for the future. If there were no assurance for peace, at least there should be Russia's non-combat assurance in the pivotal area that we were previously talking about. Russia managed to win on all fronts, with the immediate prospect of being able to impose a solution for Syria, possibly one of separation and to strengthen its direct military position in the area through two major strategic bases in continuous expansion.

Perhaps even more interesting than the predictable message of the US President, standing on the pile of very serious problems faced by domestic politics, we have another very interesting

His analysis becomes more accurate in a paper published in 1943 "The Round World and the Winning of Peace": *„When we consider this rapid review of the guidelines of general history, is it not obvious a certain continuance of the geographical links? This vast Eurasian region inaccessible to ships, a pivot region of world politics that was only open to nomadic horsemen in Antiquity is now entirely covered by a rail network. The conditions were being created there for an economic and military power of a considerable size...Russia replaces the Mongol Empire. The pressure exerted on Finland, Scandinavia, Poland, Turkey, Persia, India and China now replaces the centrifugal raids of the people of the steppe. It can strike in all directions, out of the north, the full development of its rail network is only a matter of time... It would lead to overthrowing the balance of power in favor of the pivot-state, resulting into the expansion towards the marginal territories of Eurasia and would allow the use of the vast continental resources for shipbuilding and then the World Empire would appear”.*

Now, just like 100 years ago, negotiations are being held on the ability of the superpowers to secure and exercise on a reasonable length of time the control over the pivotal zone and the surrounding areas which give direct access to the center. As it always happens in history, the focus pivotal area is Afghanistan - a passkey into the warm seas, a territory that has never been mastered over the centuries, no matter how big or evident was the disproportion between the forces of local tribal forces plus the Taliban and



message, whose value can be assessed depending on the following European policy decisions. This is the message given by Jean-Claude Juncker to Putin: *"I have always believed that positive relations between the EU and Russia are fundamental for our continent...Our common goal should be to restore a pro-European cooperative security order. I hope you will use the fourth term to pursue this goal. I will always be a partner on this journey"*.

Such a letter is cannot be coincidental; especially just days after the EU foreign ministers have allied with Great Britain in the case of the poisoned spy, an operation of which Russia was considered to be responsible.

In my opinion, Juncker's message comes from the leaders' belief expressing the will of the Franco-German engine, namely that the future development of the European project will have to be decided in relation with the results of negotiations with Russia. It can fail or not, it may have concrete results only on certain levels...but in any case, the EU feels the urgency of the situation and does not want to miss the negotiations. This may not appeal to the Americans, with

whom they have arguments on various topics and threaten to initiate a commercial war based on the over-protectionist measures decided by Donald Trump. The European idea is to find a certain solution, together with related security guarantees for lowering tensions on its eastern border, accepting a buffer zone whose composition of countries is yet to be seen...

Who will give in and how much will be conceded in these negotiations? I have a profound doubt that the themes of the upcoming negotiations would include the standard topics (Ukraine and the full implementation of the Minsk Agreement, the situation in Crimea, the accusations of the anti-human rights in Russia etc.), but, rather, there will be discussions on the borders of the areas of influence and new maps will be drawn at the future Yalta-type meeting. In this case, China will be there anyway with its own interests of commercial expansion.

Article initially published by Adevarul, www.adevarul.ro and republished with the kind acceptance of the author.

Evolutions at the Eastern Border of Romania, the European Union and NATO



Vladimir SOCOR accepted term. Therefore, it is about a front.

How Romania's Eastern vicinity will look like on a short or a medium term? I believe we should look at this Eastern vicinity in the light of the Baltic-Pontic isthmus. It is the demarcation line between Russia and Europe, between two antagonistic civilisation concepts which are confronting along the Baltic-Pontic isthmus starting with, I think, the XIV-th century. There is a Narva fortress at an extremity of the Baltic-Pontic isthmus, a citadel consolidated by the Theutonic knights and later taken over by the Great Duchy of Livonia (Lithuania) which is facing, on the opposite bank of the Narva River, the fortress built by Ivan the Terrible. This antagonism, at a symbolical level, is visible until today. In civilisational and in geopolitical terms, it is still very present. At the southern extremity of the Baltic-Pontic isthmus, one finds the north-eastern corner of the Sea of Azov, the point from where Peter the Great initiated Russia's expansion in the Black Sea basin and the point where, near Mariupol, the Russian and the Ukrainian armies are confronting each other today. These are the two extremities of the Baltic-Pontic isthmus.

This continuous North-South land demarcation line continues in the Black Sea. The demarcation line, non-declared as such, existed in the Black Sea immediately after Russia's defeat in the Cold War, yet it crossed the eastern part of the Black Sea. Once Crimea was annexed, this separating line in the Black Sea moved to Black Sea's west. Now it passes west of Crimea leaving most of the Black Sea in Russia's sphere of influence. If until 2008 or 2014 this demarcation line was undeclared, today it is practically formalised. Romania is part of NATO's eastern front along the Baltic-Pontic isthmus. I use the term NATO's front, not NATO's flank. In a flank one has allies and friends, in a front you are facing the enemy. In NATO's terminology, the Eastern Flank is an understatement, we have the Eastern Front. The term of Eastern Flank contradicts the term Front-line state. Front-line state is a widely used and

Ukraine plays the pivotal role on this Front. When Russia contained Ukraine, it threatened Europe directly. When Russia doesn't control Ukraine, Europe is safe and it is not confronted with a direct threat. Russia capitalised during the history on the Polish-Ukrainian antagonism. During that time, Russia annexed, in the XVII-th century, Ukraine's eastern half and, in the XVIII-th century, its western half and thereafter, in 1939 and after 1944, it annexed Ukraine's present western territory of Volonia and Galicia and it took advantage every time of what was then the Ukrainian-Polish antagonism. All the time, the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact included and its re-enactment in 1944-1945. This is why it is very important for all the countries in the area to avoid the emergence of tensions between Ukraine and its western neighbours, be it Poland, Hungary or Romania. It is Russia only that can take advantage of such tensions that we will see very soon smouldering near the surface.

The southern sector of the Atlantic Alliance's eastern front is the most vulnerable. Irrespective of that, it is less defended than the Baltic and Polish sector of the Eastern Front. While on the northern sector of the eastern front one notices the multinational NATO presence, with multinational troops from different NATO states, plus an American brigade which is outside the NATO framework, as a national American project, on the southern flank we have only local units, not NATO multinational units, and their mission is training and drills only, not facing the enemy or fighting them. It is a mismatch that should be rectified. The Black Sea area has been, beginning practically with 1991-1992, the epicenter of the conflicts that are called the "frozen ones". All these conflicts are taking place within the extended Black Sea area, an extra-clue of vulnerability, indicating an area where Russia practically suspended the application of international

law. The international law is not applied where Russia maintains the "frozen" conflicts. Apart from the conventional-military threats, it was the Black Sea area where one finds the first experiments of hybrid warfare. It started in Transnistria actually, something the Western chanceries and many other factors involved, regional factors included, generally ignored. Hybrid warfare started, and we saw it, in 1991-1992, in Transnistria, in a rudimentary form, unevolved, yet in all its splendour with elements already known in Transnistria that appeared in 2014 in Donbas.

And I would like to draw the attention on a neglected dimension of Russia's hybrid warfare, namely the existence in Russia of a social basis of the hybrid warfare at inter-state level. Russia's social base is a lumpenised mass of former military, most of them young, soon after graduating the national service. Many of them are veterans of different post-Afghanistan conflicts, as Afghanistan generation is already a thing of the past, and also a great mass of lumpens without future perspective career, without families, ready to sacrifice for either an ideology, such as that of the Russian world, or for mercenary purposes and of material survival or just seeking adventures. We saw that mass moving from deep down Russia, from Ural, from Siberia towards eastern Ukraine for feeding the hybrid warfare machine. And now, very recently, we had an echo of that mass of lumpens weaponized in Syria where a private Russian company, specialised in mobilising mercenaries, that acted in Ukraine as well, sent in Syria hundreds, several hundreds of volunteers. Therefore, there is this human reserve that can be thrown at any time on any front.

The so-called "frozen" conflicts. What do we understand from such "frozen" conflicts? We understand the lack of a political solution and the fact that nobody is shot at. Therefore, an apparent military calm and lack of a political solution. In Ukraine, the conflict is not frozen yet. There, shooting is still on-going. A mistaken objective of the Western diplomacy is that of "freezing" the conflict in Ukraine through a solution seeking only military calm, first of all, yet a semi-political

solution satisfactorily for Russia through submitting some de-centralising formulas for Ukraine. This is the sense of the special statute formula incorporated, at Russia's insistence, in what is called the Minsk Agreement, a document glorified among others by the German government with the argument that there is no alternative.

I do not use the term of Minsk Agreement, I use the term of Minsk Dictate. It was dictated by Russia to a kneeled-down militarily Ukraine and lacking military assistance at that moment, September 2014-February 2015. And I tell the German diplomats that talking to Ukraine about the Minsk Agreement is tantamount to talking to Germany of Treaty of Versailles. It is a dictate, I say, not an agreement. It includes the formula of special statute for Ukraine. Russia seeks two federalization projects in Europe or elsewhere.

It is possible and I expect in Syria, too, to see a federalization proposal yet, for the time being, Russia is seeking two federalization projects in Europe:

1. For the Republic of Moldova, and
2. For Ukraine.

For the Republic of Moldova, starting with 2003, the project was called federalization, with the Kozak memorandum and the Russian diplomacy insisted, since very recently, to re-update the Kozak memorandum accusing Moldova and the West of having rejected it. Now, Russia uses the term of special statute for Transnistria. The Russian diplomacy started to use the term of special statute which they really imposed at Minsk in September 2014 – February 2015. It is envisaged that an enclave be set up in Donbas under Russia's real direct military, political, economic and, from the standpoint of the local governing staff control, yet integrated, on paper, within the Ukraine's institutional space, but serving as channel of Russia's penetration into the Ukrainian political system with blocking powers at the top of Ukraine's decision-making level.

This is the content of the special statute sought after by Russia in Donbas. Actually, Russia never abandoned the federalization notion. Russia

wants the implementation of this model, which is to be introduced in Donbas and in other Ukraine's regions based on the administrative-territorial units existing in Ukraine that are called *oblasti*, i.e. regions, that I call provinces. I refer to the administrative-territorial entity, not to geographical regions. Administrative-territorial regions in the provinces.

It is one of the reasons why Russia does not unify the territory occupied in Donetsk and Luhansk in a single entity and leaves them in two different entities. The economic, demographic, historical and linguistic characteristics are identical, contrary to Abkhazia and Osetia, where they do neither overlap and are not neighbouring. Yet Russia doesn't unify Donetsk with Luhansk. Why? For it hopes to trigger a similar dynamics in other Ukraine's provinces also based on the existing administrative-territorial units.

Ukraine is, historically and traditionally, a very chaotic society, with a powerful potential of anarchy and centrifugal tendencies. Such phenomena were visible in Ukraine along its entire history, including during the short independence period in 1918-1920-1921 and we saw them erupting after the Orange Revolution which, instead of balancing and homogenising the Ukrainian political system, led to the exacerbation of differences, including the local-territorial ones. The Ukrainian political system is already very de-centralised. It is a wrong idea that Ukraine needs de-centralisation. The Ukrainian state is so weak and the central authority so inefficient that some of the regions are barely controlled. In many cases, but not in all cases, Ukraine's regions are fiefdoms of some local tycoons with their own interests in local businesses and power sharing. The local tycoons exert a huge influence in Ukraine. The central authority is competing with local authority and is compelled to reach unofficial understandings with the local power in order to prevent more pronounced centrifugal movements.

There is a continuous transaction between the central authority and the local authorities. In case of a special statute for Donbas, I foresee a

downstream effect of similar demands in other Ukraine's regions with the risk that the shield represented by Ukraine for its western neighbours disintegrate from within.

Personally I know several Ukraine's regions as I traveled there and I know exactly as the Ukrainians do and the Ukrainian media present very clearly what are the groups exerting the informal yet real and extra-constitutional power in Ukraine's different regions and fiefdoms. And Mr Poroshenko knows, as did previously Mr Kuchma. Mr Poroshenko is compelled to take into account these groups. So, a special statute for Donbas would stimulate in my opinion a cascade of similar demands.

In Moldova we have a similar situation. If during 2002-2005, the federalization was contemplated at the official level and it was about the federalization between Transnistria and the rest of the Republic of Moldova, the situation shifted to the worse. Now we can foresee a chain-reaction in the Republic of Moldova where a special statute, be it already agreed or contemplated and seriously spoken about could trigger a chain-reaction in other parts of the Republic of Moldova. The ethnical and linguistic enclaves in Gagauzia, Bălți, Taraclia, may lead to a process I described it as a potential process, not of federalization but of cantonisation of the Republic of Moldova.

This is why we should consider the issue of a special statute for Donbas and of a special statute for Transnistria bound to each other. Moldova is more vulnerable than Ukraine. It is more vulnerable because in Moldova the national consciousness is underdeveloped. One cannot find in Moldova the patriotic sentiment which development we witnessed in Ukraine in the last years. If in Ukraine we give up the issue of Donbas, that would lead to a patriotic reaction and the leadership is afraid of such a development, while in Moldova the leadership is not afraid of such a development.

Some Western diplomats tell the government in Chişinău: "Why don't you make concessions, why aren't you generous?" This is the concession formula, be generous! The politicians are told:

"when you don't have to confront a local boomerang, be more generous because you can afford" Moldova is more vulnerable due to these and other considerations. And if Moldova is the one which gives up first on the issue of the special statute, certainly Russia will use this model as a precedent against Ukraine.

One of the two is the instrument for obtaining the special statute or a special configuration between its territory and Russia, while Russia is the instrument for local elections or referenda.

We witnessed the use of this instrument in Gagauzia in February, 2014 and, in that same year, in Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk.

Gagauzia's leadership states that in case of obtaining a special statute for Transnistria, Gagauzia will insist on obtaining an equivalent statute and will repeat a popular consultation, a referendum for instance.

From here, the connection between the two processes. In the Republic of Moldova's case, the special statute is not negotiated and it is not even suggested. Instead, the regional park is proposed where the so-called "small steps" are to be made before the special statute is to be negotiated in the future. The so-called "small steps" are intended to improve the atmosphere, would lead to increasing the trust for making possible the negotiation of a special statute. "The small steps" we saw on paper in November-December 2017, namely the Tighina and Vienna documents, are leading gradually, almost imperceptibly, towards Moldova's being left without sovereignty on the left bank and lending and granting Transnistria elements of sovereignty.

Therefore the "small steps" do not lead towards a coming closer but to Transnistria's estranging from the Republic of Moldova's constitutional and legal framework according to dialectics of unity, division and unity on a new basis. This is how dialectics works. It appeared for the first time in the 1997 Primakov's Memorandum where, among others, it had still present sequels by establishing the notion of contractual federation between Chişinău and Tiraspol. It considers that the state of the Republic of Moldova ceased to exist and Transnistria separated itself so that

it can be reconstituted through negotiations on an equal footing between Chişinău şi Tiraspol.

And OSCE indeed, the OSCE mission led by the USA in Chişinău in 2002, moved on to this negotiation-reunification of the Republic of Moldova, of Moldova on the right bank with Transnistria, through a constitutional bilateral agreement called Federation. The negotiations started in 2002 and were suspended as a result of the Kozak Memorandum being leveled in November, 2003 yet the federalisation remained official policy of the OSCE mission conducted by the American diplomats in Chişinău until 2005. Now we speak of a new reform of the special statute.

In the Republic of Moldova, a new basis appeared, which did not exist previously for the track of the "small steps".

I would like to add here the new political base in the Republic of Moldova of the process called the "small steps".

The political basis of this process is the political partnership between Messrs Vlad Plahotniuc and Igor Dodon. It is not a rectilinear partnership, it is not an unequivocal partnership but it is a partnership between two parties which interests coincide partly and are partly conflictual. It is a partnership that might be called antagonistic. A partnership between two entities having partially common interests and partially different ones and which are using one another as in any political process, are mutually using each other for reaching common purposes while remaining in competition for reaching the specific targets of each entity. The Plahotniuc-Dodon partnership appeared in all its splendour since 2015-2016, when the actual power held de facto by Plahotniuc, destroyed all the political parties in the Republic of Moldova with the exception of Socialists.

Mr Plahotniuc implemented all his already classical methods: buying deputies for constituting a new parliamentary majority, co-opting mayors and local counsellors, depriving mass-media of surviving means, slandering when needed through his media trust, using compromising materials he collected for either blackmailing or stimulating (buying) the political competitors.

All these were used by Mr Plahotniuc against all political parties with the exception of Socialists whom he let grow unimpeded. In 2016, Mr Plahotniuc's TVs had a decisive contribution to Mr Igor Dodon's election as president against Maia Sandu. A 52%-48% victory was attained taking into account that Mr Plahotniuc's TVs incessantly assailed Andrei Năstase and Maia Sandu. Maia Sandu was especially assailed during the second round of the presidential elections in the most primitive ways and continued with bringing in 17,000 voters from Transnistria in a military manner regimented and carried by busses which crossed the Nistru River in order to vote for Mr Dodon on the right bank with the support of Mr Plahotniuc's machinery.

So, Dodon is president thanks to Mr Plahotniuc who allowed Dodon to create a reconciliation platform with Russia and to obtain certain advantages for Dodon that could pass on positively on the Republic of Moldova's domestic policy to the benefit of the ruling party and of the Socialist Party. The firsts visits Dodon paid to Moscow were marked by requests on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova. Reopening the Russian market for the Moldavian farmers and a favourable treatment for the Moldavian guest-workers in Russia, something the government could have assumed as merits of domestic policy thanks to Mr Dodon.

Dodon negotiated as well on that occasion the appointment of Plahotniuc's man as chairman of Moldovagaz, a company where the majority shareholder is Gazprom. At Mr Dodon's insistence, the Russian side accepted that Plahotniuc's man be appointed chairman of Moldovagaz – the biggest business company in the Republic of Moldova.

In the Parliament, the socialists secured the necessary votes for renewing the licenses to broadcast of Mr Plahotniuc's TVs for another six years as they were close to expire, if I am not wrong and, in exchange, the socialists received from the Audio-Visual Council licenses to broadcast for two TV channels for the Socialist Party.

Here we see the partnership. It culminated with the adoption, negotiated jointly by the Demo-

cratic Party (DP) and the Socialist Party of the Republic of Moldova (SPRM) of the new electoral legislation guaranteeing the achievement of the joint objective of marginalising the pro-European forces, practically by excluding them from the decision-making system. The new electoral legislation guarantees a bipartisan political system made up of DP and SPRM with the complete marginalisation of the pro-European parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition. These are the joint objectives.

Through this political partnership, Mr Plahotniuc hopes to mend the broken relations with Russia. The relations with Russia are tense but not antagonistic. Russia does not criticise Mr Plahotniuc through its TV stations. It has a reserved attitude. Chişinău does and creates all kind of small incidents. For instance, it sends back the Russian journalists or does not allow the access of the Russian journalists, declares Rogozin persona non grata, something more or less symbolical yet it achieves more fundamental things than the symbolic ones. Namely, the partnership with Dodon domestically. The fact is that Dodon is such an important force in Moldova and able to implement the "small steps" for the settlement in Transnistria. Dodon entered the Republic of Moldova's policy having in hand the banner of the reintegration with Transnistria. A catchphrase based partially, not totally, on the Moldavian character, the Moldavian identity. That would be, in the Moldavian-type politicians' opinion, incomplete without Transnistria's reintegration.

Yet Plahotniuc snatched from Dodon's hands this electoral card or this banner. The negotiations concerning Transnistria were taken over by Plahotniuc's governance from Dodon's hands. It is not Dodon who negotiates although he wanted that. Plahotniuc's commanded governance is negotiating the "small steps" and possibly the special statute directly with Tiraspol and implicitly with Moscow.

Very dissatisfied, Dodon denounced several times Vadim Crasnoselischi to Moscow stating the latter refuses to negotiate with him and negotiates instead with Plahotniuc's governance.

And Cranoselischi made his justification accepted by Moscow and turned Dodon out arguing that Plahotniuc is the one holding real power. So you have to negotiate with him the "small steps" and possibly the special statute. This is the second connection besides the domestic political partnership. The "small steps" and the special statute are the second connection through which Mr Plahotniuc tries to obtain a reconciliation with Moscow. Not a reorientation towards Russia but a rebalancing of the external position of the Republic of Moldova. As a conclusion of our panel, I will try very carefully to present a blueprint of how will look Romania's Eastern vicinity in the coming future, on a short term.

The developments are so quick that even the prognoses on a short term can be hazardous if not downright risky. However, let's try to assume this predicted hazard. At least on a short term and I think also on a medium term, Romania is completely secure. It is not threatened either directly or in military conventional terms by Russia, not in what concern directly the hybrid warfare. The prerequisite of this relative safety in Romania on a short and medium term is an independent and efficient Ukraine, a fully functional Ukrainian state under an undeclared, yet a de facto protective umbrella of the USA. Not by means of NATO, since any action in this direction needs a unanimous consensus within NATO, a consensus that lacks and will further lack but as an USA's and other NATO individual member countries' initiative in coordination with the USA.

Ukraine is that shield which until 1991 we could only dream of. The Romanian space is directly bordered by Russia beginning with the 19th century, since 300 years. Until then, what could an imaginary observer atop the Soroca citadel looking eastward notice beyond the Nistru River? Who was Moldova's neighbour beyond Soroca? It was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania a few hundred meters away, a component part of the Polish-Ukrainian state. That space was conquered by Russia at the end of the 18th century. The Polish-Lithuanian and then the Ukrainian barrier between the Romanian space and Russia vanished since 300 years.

Starting with 1991 we have again this barrier, a vital prerequisite of Romania's safety, not only of its external safety but also of the integrity of Romania's internal political system. For in case of a direct vicinity with Russia, motivations would appear for "some" players of the Romanian internal system of whom reach deals with Russia first. It was a place of transactions, springing up from good intentions. We recall the situation at the end of 1943 and at the beginning of 1944, when a real competition emerged among different domestic political groups on who is reaching first an understanding with Russia: the Antonescu Government or the historical parties, or Tătăărăscu's group, and it was internal policy competition. That was a paradigm that does not apply exclusively to Romania. It is an universal paradigm. We saw it in Finland, too, in 1944, and we saw it in Hungary, in 1944-1945.

So, the Ukrainian shield was a vital prerequisite for Romania's safety. The formula of Ukraine's neutralisation is, in my opinion, a completely unviable formula. There are no such preconditions for what is called Finlandisation. First of all, Ukraine does not have such natural obstacles making possible the resistance against a Russian attack, especially climatic obstacles, insurmountable for the attackers. Ukraine doesn't dispose of such obstacles. It is a plain, ideal maybe for tanks offensive. The Ukrainian society doesn't dispose of Finland's social discipline and cohesion. There (in Ukraine), too, competitions among internal political groups will emerge. We saw such competitions even during the Orange Revolution, between Timoshenko and Luscenko- a competition for Russia's goodwill, to say nothing of Ianukovich's efforts for winning the race for Russia's goodwill.

Therefore a neutralised Ukraine, a Finlandised Ukraine is unviable. It should be ever better integrated in a protection system, under the American protection, a system evolving presently and we see it. The Trump Administration is pivoting towards this, something the Obama Administration rejected. Canada and Lithuania, too, take part in these efforts, not under their national names and not on behalf of the NATO Alliance. Therefore, Ukraine's integration has to take

place not in connection with NATO but through a new American and some other countries social connection, a trilateral one: Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova.

Such a trilateral had been tested during the recent Interparliamentary Conference in Chişinău. As long as Moldova is ruled by the current governance, it cannot be part of this trilateral. Ukraine and Georgia are openly aspiring to become NATO state members. Moldova declared itself neutral and I want to add that neutrality is part of Mr Plahotniuc's attempts of reaching a *modus vivendi* with Russia. Moldova refuses the NATO option and is obstinate about staying neutral without having a safety net.

Ukraine and Georgia assert officially, in the Constitution and in the legislation, that Russia is an aggressor and the respective territories as being occupied.

Moldova declares that Russia is a mediator and agrees upon negotiating a special status for the occupied territory in the presence of the Russian troops, before their hypothetical withdrawal.

So, Ukraine's importance:

The global context, the Black Sea region in the global context of the Russian policy is the main stage of Russia's efforts to revise the post 1991 status quo. It is this region particularly where Russia's anti-status quo efforts are being concentrated with step-by-step achievements we see ever since 1991, step-by-step in Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine. Russia seeks not only revising the status quo but also the revision of the behaviour rules in the international system, in the inter-state relations. And the extended region of the Black Sea functions as a lab for Russia. I have said at the beginning that it is exactly here where Russia suspended the *de facto* enforcement of the international law. Here Russia introduced the no-rules game. Russia is introducing the no-rules game at the European level as there are not any longer dividing lines, demarcation lines of the spheres of influence and these lines cannot be restored anymore if we suppose someone would like to chart again the lines of the sphere of influence.

Russia is intervening in the former Western sphere of influence, is intervening in the elections, in the political systems, in the issues relating to the political administrative and territorial organisation, in the energy systems, is trying in an unofficial manner to introduce a Russia's right of having a say, why not a vote in the Western decision-making systems. Russia is abolishing the behaviour rules in the neighbourin maritime and air space and even within the maritime and air space of the Western sphere of security. Russia's message is: "We do not recognize accepted or generally accepted common rules but we want to re-negotiate the rules as a general part of revising the post 1991 status quo". Russia wants a revision of Ukraine's status quo and the revision of the pertaining rules. We may already predict that in case new commonly accepted rules are agreed, Russia will start immediately to violate them seeking a new revision in accordance with the salami technique, slice after slice.

The Black Sea region is and will continue to be the lab for experimenting these techniques and these no-rules games. This is why we should not accept the notion of special statute which would single out Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova as Russian experimenting objects. The notion should be rejected as long as Russia remains accepted as mediator either in the "5+2" process relating to Moldova-Transnistria or in the so-called Minsk process. With regard to Ukraine and Donbas, these processes should not be accepted as legitimate as long as Russia appears there as mediator in the processes. These processes cannot be legitimate as long as they are left to OSCE as well.

OSCE doesn't have the capability and not even the wish, if it had the wish it doesn't have the capability, of acting independently from Russia. Russia has a veto right and OSCE cannot make any move, not even to issue a statement without Russia's previous agreement in accordance with the veto right. Therefore, invoking certain OSCE agreements, the ones concluded in Istanbul in 1999 but never renewed after that, is a proof of Moldavian diplomacy's lack of professionalism since as long as we stick to OSCE we are not seri-

ous about the settlement.

As long as we stick to Minsk we are not serious with regard to the settlement in eastern Ukraine.

The current imperative is to preserve the possibility of a settlement favourable to the West in the future. The acceptance in the near future or even on a medium term of a solution favourable to Russia either in Transnistria or in Donbas would permanently block a settlement for the common benefit of the West, Ukraine, Moldova and Romania.

The acceptance of "small steps", of the special statute in Transnistria, in Donbas, would block possible future solutions for the common benefit of the West, Ukraine, Moldova and Romania.

In terms of paradigm, it is the moment to halt the march towards a negative settlement now which would fatally jeopardise a positive settlement in the future.

Thank you for your attention!

The article represents Mr Vladimir Socor's conference at the event organised by the University Foundation of the Black Sea in Bucharest on "Moscow doesn't believe in tears. Neither does America. How Romania's Eastern vicinity will look like?" on March 15th, 2018. Article republished with the kind acceptance of the organizer, the Institute for International Studies and Relations of the Romanian Academy, director PhD Dan Dungaciu

Vladimir Putin. A tsar democratically elected



Liliana POPESCU

What is happening in the Russian Federation? There were presidential elections – where the reelection of Vladimir Putin was absolutely predictable (over 70).

Russia has slowly but surely slipped toward autocracy since the 1993 Constitution - a constitution which gives the extremely high powers to

the President. The Kremlin regime is currently a pseudo-democratic regime, where there is only the façade of democracy, but not much else.

1. There is a multiparty system, but with a dominant party (United Russia), which predictably wins the elections;
2. There is plurality of candidates in the presidential elections, but a 100% predictable winner;
3. There are crippled political rights (the case of Alexei Navalny, Putin's main opponent, who was banned from voting);
4. There are deteriorated civil rights (multiple cases of homicide and assaults against the opposition, journalists etc).

Due to Mr. Putin's predictable reelection, the presidential elections of 18 March rather resembled a ritual of his appointment as Tsar. It is just that this did not happen under the medieval divine right of the King of the Third Rome (Moscow claimed this role), but he was anointed with the chrism of the formal democratic procedures accepted in much of the world today. The slide towards pseudo-democracy was accompanied by an increased ability of the system to present itself as a regime with democratic features formal (elections, multiple candidates and a multiparty system, political and civil rights). In 2008, President Medvedev has proposed amending the Russian Constitution, so that Vladimir Putin's candidacy for a third term (extended to 6 years) in 2012 became legal. This was not a subsequent candidacy of the previous two terms (2000-2004, 2004-2008) and he could run. At the current presidential elections, the only candidate with a chance to spoil Putin's reelection predictability - Alexei Navalny - was eliminated from the race. The predictions on the percentage with which Putin will win the elections ranged from 60 to 70 percent, as indicated by the surveys.

Beyond these elements, painstakingly built over the last 18 years of Russian leadership, Putin was also helped by the precarious democratic consciousness of the Russians.



In a sense, Putin is a president expressing the Russians' democratic intention, as much as people disliked it. The majority of the Russians want him to be president. It is not a forced vote and most likely there will be no problems with the election procedures. Putin is a popular president who has worked hard to build and perpetuate his popularity - both internally and especially externally. How is it that the Russians wanted Putin's reelection? He did so by gradually reducing the power of the opposition; by subjecting the oligarchs' policy; by strengthening the state sector in the economy (strategic sectors are 100% owned or state-controlled); by strengthening the role of so-called siloviki (the powerful ones - sila means power in Russian), continuators of the intelligence personnel working with the former KGB agent Putin; by strengthening the power of the dominant party with siloviki - the party created in 2000 to support VVP, United Russia; by the centralization of power and submission of the Chechen rebels and others, so that although it is called a Federation, Russia is more like a centralized state; and not least, by the external campaigns - the annexation of Crimea and the involvement in the Donbas conflict, the involvement in the war in Syria, arming and the public international presence. As some analysts say, Russia has become indispensable both in solving the conflict in Ukraine and the conflict in Syria. Russia led by Putin has regained the status of a major player on the international arena and has become again a source of pride for the Russians after President Yeltsin, who was dancing drunk and was missing international meetings due to his drinking.

Beyond these elements, painstakingly built over the last 18 years of Russian leadership, Putin was also helped by the precarious democratic consciousness of the Russians - of course, in the sense of liberal democracy. The experience of the Russian liberal democracy lasted - in the most optimistic scenario - 12 years (1905-1917) + 10 years (1990-2000) = 22! This is not to underestimate other valuable features of the Soviet regime, which opened opportunities and a better life for millions of people (suppressing, torturing and killing millions in the Gulag). I

know, it is an extremely controversial aspect for the Romanians and I am absolutely sure that "anticommunists" are terrified of what I have just said.

What would Putin do after his reelection? This is a question I have often heard recently. Would he want to be reelected in 2024? Would he change again the constitution, being inspired by the new (old) Chinese model? I think not. I think he will choose a successor, whom he will support in 2024 - a man loyal to him 100%, as Putin was to Yeltsin, who will guarantee immunity and impunity in all cases related to property acquired and other illegal issues. This, assuming that there will be a 2024. What will he do in terms of policy? The speculations in this domain are even higher. Political analysts still argue whether Putin is or not a strategist. I think he is a strategist. Firstly, he was an excellent strategist for himself: he managed to stay in power for 18 years until now (with a high popularity among the Russians) and is about to accumulate 24 more years, if no political earthquake or revolution happens. Secondly, he managed to increase Russia's power internationally, impose Russia at an international level considerably more than reported to its economic strength. He surprised the Western allies with the annexation of Crimea and the hybrid war in 2014, directed against the West and especially against the USA.





He has made an alliance with China - which is a substantial purchaser of oil from Russia, a partner in the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and which is also interested in undermining the institutions of liberal order dominated by the US and the West. China and Russia have also cooperated in the establishment of institutions that compete with the World Bank and IMF: AIIB (Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank - whose Board of Governors includes representatives from Poland and Hungary, but not from Romania), NDB (New Development Bank). The recent years have shown an expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), an organization of economic, political and security cooperation established in 2001, which includes China, Russia and other Asian countries. Putin's Russia has also taken important steps (including methods of political and diplomatic coercion - see the case of Armenia) in strengthening the Eurasian Economic Union - an alternative pole of possible attraction for the post-Soviet countries, even if its profile is far from the European Union's level of integration. Under the Western sanctions, Russia has resisted and even managed to recover economically, truly, substantially below the standards before 2013. It is important for us in Romania, not to underestimate Vova, or to overestimate him. I do not think that the intransigence of the insults on paper or the television flattery serve us. Being a strategist, Putin will pursue a new European

security arrangement, convenient to its own interests. The presence in Ukraine provides him a privileged role at the negotiating table. He wants the erosion of the US power, which he accuses of interference in the Russian business, such as the "colored revolutions" (a remarkable Machiavellian invention). He aims at having a big say in negotiating a settlement of the conflict in Syria. He aims at achieving an important position in the negotiations for a new international order about to appear. Putin is rather a Padrino than a Tsar, if we consider the methods used.

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The cartoons' source: Sergey Elkin

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Confrontation with the USA and Europe as the genesis of Putin's fourth presidential term

Victor HVOZD

March 18, 2018, according to the results of pseudo-election in Russia, V. Putin, who will remain in office until at least 2024, again became President of the country. Such a result was absolutely expected, and at first glance does not change anything in or around the Russian Federation. At the same time, changes still take place both internally for Russia and externally, including geopolitical ones.

Thus, Russia has actually reached a qualitatively new level of confrontation with the United States and Europe, which is aimed at implementing Moscow's intentions to restore the distribution of spheres of influence in the world. It was this course that was proclaimed by V. Putin on the eve of the presidential elections in the country at his address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on March 1, 2018. At this, due to Russia's not having economic, political and ideological abilities to compete with the West, it directly relies on military force and the use of "hybrid" wars.

At the same time, the issue of resolving socio-economic problems of the country, which again in a veiled form was acknowledged by Putin in his speech before the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, is actually "frozen". The reason

for this is the Kremlin's actual giving up any hopes for the resumption of positive relations



with the West, and, consequently, for lifting of sanctions from Russia and getting Western investments and technologies. Besides, the need to further increase the costs of maintaining the country's military potential is a critical burden for the Russian economy.

The resoluteness and intransigence of the Kremlin's intentions to hold a course of hard confrontation with the West was demonstrated on an example of Russia's special services' use of chemical weapons (neural-paralytic gas) on March 4, 2018 against the former Colonel of the Russian GRU S. Skripal, who had got asylum in the UK. As a result of the chemical attack in the British city of Salisbury, along with a former Russian intelligence officer, his daughter and 21 other people suffered. At this, according to British intelligence assessments, there was a danger of poisoning of many more people which would have extremely dangerous consequences.

In fact, this was the first case of the use of chemical weapons in Europe with a large number of victims after the Second World War, when it was used in Nazi concentration camps for the mass destruction of prisoners. Until recently, such actions by the



Russian intelligence services had a selective (point) character with the use of other substances, in particular, radioactive polonium-210, for the murder of former FSB officer V. Litvinenko in November 2006 in London.

Thus, Putin's regime showed that it not only has weapons of mass destruction and means of its delivery (as declared by the President of the Russian Federation in his address to the Federal Assembly), but will not hesitate to use it. Especially because he has nowhere to retreat. This way or other, the current leadership of Russia and personally V. Putin will be forced to answer for Chechnya, for Georgia, for Ukraine, and for Syria.

All this was perceived by the West as a direct threat to its security and a direct challenge from the Russian Federation. At the same time, instead of scaring the United States and Europe, on what Russia was counting, the actions of the Putin regime only strengthened the unity of the West in confronting Moscow's aggressive policy. At this, firm intentions were shown to provide an adequate response to the Kremlin. Thus, the United States, NATO and leading EU countries have expressed readiness to protect their security under all circumstances. At the same time, Russia's use of chemical weapons in Salisbury was seen as a threat to the sovereignty of Great Britain, which is an actual continuation of Moscow's attacks on Georgia and Ukraine. Proceeding from this, preparations for a new set of sanctions against Russia began. In particular, according to the British leadership, a thorough investigation will be conducted on the origin of V. Putin's environment's and personally



of the Russian President's assets on the British territory with the possibility of their further "freezing" or even confiscation.

On the whole, the above-mentioned processes make the limited "cold" war between Russia and the West, which arose after the beginning of Moscow's armed aggression against Ukraine, turn into a full-scale confrontation. In fact, the level of such confrontation is the sharpest since the Caribbean crisis in 1962 and the USSR's sending its troops to Afghanistan in 1979. Both then and now, both sides are taking active steps to build and demonstrate their military capabilities, including in the missile and nuclear sphere. Given the irreconcilability of the positions of Russia and the United States, the confrontation between them with high probability will continue until the exhaustion of one of the parties, which will force it to make concessions.

To date, the USA and EU sanctions have already forced Moscow to fully use its Reserve Fund to support the Russian economy and move to spending the National Welfare Fund, which remains the only source of maintaining relative stability in the country. According to the Federal Budget Law for 2018 and the planned period 2019–2020, the money of the last of the Russian funds, and hence the possibility of further deterring the crisis in the Russian economy, will be exhausted in two years. Proceeding from such prospects, Moscow will be raising the "bar" of confrontation with the USA and Europe in order to force them into concessions, including through nuclear and other types of blackmail. At this, the continuation of Putin's presidential term for the next six years actually "unleashes



his hands” to intensify such actions, despite the worsening of domestic problems in the country.

In the current situation, Ukraine will remain in the center of the confrontation between Russia and the West. Further development of Russian-American and Russian-European relations will depend on the resolving



of the Ukrainian issue. First of all, this concerns the settlement of the conflict in the Donbas. In case if Ukraine and its Western partners maintain a solid position on this issue, the possibility of deterring the neo-imperial policy of Russia will be preserved. At the same time, the level of rivalry between Russia and the USA and Europe will also increase. Otherwise, Moscow will be able to realize its strategic goals for the distribution of spheres of influence in the world and establishment of its control over the countries of the former USSR as the first stage in the construction of the Eurasian geopolitical paradigm (according to the theories of Russian geopolitics, in particular A. Dugin, which are practiced by Putin's regime).

Given these circumstances, we may expect intensification of Russia's efforts on the Ukrainian direction, aimed at: at least restoration of the pro-Russian government in Ukraine; as a maximum — a complete disintegration of the Ukrainian state. In case of Moscow's success: in the first case, it will have the opportunity to resolve in its favor the conflict in the Donbas and return Ukraine to its sphere of influence; in the second — to exclude the Ukrainian issue from a circle of international problems completely. It is at this that are aimed Russia's actions to destabilize the situation in Ukraine by supporting and initiating tall types of protests of populist forces, including those that are masked by the national Ukrainian movements. Similarly, Russia will build up its efforts to undermine the unity of the Western world — first of all, the EU and relations between the United States and Europe.

Can we oppose anything to this? Of course we

can. Ukraine has already got united around the idea of a revival of the Ukrainian nation, which allowed it not only to stop Russia's aggression, but also to become an example for other countries of how to confront Moscow's expansion. Moreover, the whole civilized world is supporting Ukraine.

In fact, to date, the United States, NATO and the EU have already assumed responsibility for the future of our state. For example, in September last year, the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement entered into full force, which opened for Ukraine the way to the European Union, and in March, 2018 NATO recognized Ukraine's status of an “aspirant country”, which opened the door for it to the North Atlantic Alliance as well.

As for Russia, the actions of the Putin regime not only do not allow it to reach the status of a really great power, but on the contrary, it has in fact transformed it into a pariah state on a par with North Korea and Iran. In this regard, the comments on the presidential elections in Russia in the government media of the country are rather indicative. In particular, one of the first such comments was the announcement that 100 % of Russian citizens, who are in the territory of the DPRK, voted.

According to the Central Election Commission of Russia, about 76.7 % of peoples voted for V. Putin. Thus, they not only themselves have chosen their future, but also shared with the Putin regime the responsibility for all the negative consequences of its actions, both for the Russian Federation itself and for the whole world.

ON THE "ISLAMIC EUROPE"



**Ambassador prof. Dumitru
CHICAN**

MOTTO:

"A relationship with Islam must be correct, promoted with prudence, based on the clear understanding of its limits and possibilities and conscience of the important gap existing between the European culture having deep Christian roots and the Islamic thinking"

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Ioan Paul II : "Ecclesia in Europa", 2003

I. "Elsewhere" and "Someone else".

Islam between identity and otherness

Due to objective reasons, most of the discussions concerning the issues relating to Islam and the Muslim community as part of mankind's historical and civilisational becoming lead to the "East-West" dichotomy which exaggerated use in the contemporary modernity risks to diminish and vulgarize the value, the symbolical charge and the axiological importance of the paradigm itself. All these inconveniences cannot either hide or deny the reality that, starting with the VIIth century, namely the moment when in the eastern desert of the Arabian Peninsula, Muhammad of Mekka has begun his mission work and, until today, our civilization evolved carefully considering the fault line separating the old world between the West and the East, between the Christian West and the Middle and Near East subjected to the green flag of the new monotheistic religion of Islam. A fluctuating fault line in accordance with the Muslim advance into western territories or with the Christian advance into the "house of Islam".

We are indebted to Latin language for terms (by which we understand, for the time being, cardinal geographical landmarks only) of Ori-

ent (from *orior*, to wake up, to rise, to ascend) and the Occident (from *occido*, to fall, to perish, to vanish, to vane). The emergence of Christianity seemed to have given the geographical differentiations no religious connotations as long as alongside a Christian Occident there was a non-Christian Occident and as long as the Orient was not "Muslim" from the very beginning, since this attribute appeared later when the new Islamic religion expanded geographically. Only with the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the Occident settled its geographical and cultural frontiers. Yet, what happened with the other side, situated, by its origins, where the sun rises?

First, mention should be made that the Arabic language imposed the astronomical criterion of the daily solar cycle for distinguishing between a *Mashriq* – the place where the sun rises – and a *Maghrib* – the place where it sets. For the science of the time, that separating line remains relative and fluctuating in the Arab world, depending on the geographical position of the observer at a certain moment. Indeed, this relativism specific to Islam's preceding period in the Arab world will be later corrected during the effervescence period of the Omayyad, Abbasid and Moorish cultures when the Arabs, the inventors of the first astronomical observatories, made the necessary corrections valid up to our times.

A second moment generating the separation between the East and West was the so-called *Hegira*¹. If, until then, the Muslims were praying towards Jerusalem, starting with *Hegira* the direction changed towards Mekka which became



1. *Hegira*, in Arabic "*hijra*", emigration, exodus, designates the moment Muhammad and his first followers left Mekka to Medina, in 622 A.D. A crucial moment of Islamic history marking the beginning of the Muslim calendar as well.

until today a *centrum mundi* for the Muslim global community.

Finally, a third great turning moment was marked by the Quranic revelation itself. In the Quran, Orient and the Occident seem to constitute a duality which, from the religious perspective, should be eliminated since "God is the master of the Sun Rises and the Sun Sets", (The Quran, XXIV:35) and the holy tree, *arbor vitae*, is in the Islamic mystique "neither to the East, nor to the West" (Al-Ghazālī : *Miškāt Al-Anwār* (The Lights Cubicle, National Printing House, Cairo, 2010)

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In this spatial and temporal universe, the traditional Islamic collective mind divides the world by a double measure: the first, impious, that establishes that in an inaccurate and unsettled geography, the world is divided between Mashrik, corresponding today to the Arab Orient, overlapped by the space occupied by the Asian Arab states and of the Arabic Peninsula, and Maghrib, for the Occident, corresponding, in modern history, to the Arab north of the African continent; a second demarcation line, religious this time, divides the human community between *Dar Al-Islām*, "The House of Islam", designating the territories inhabited by Muslims, with the variant *Dar Al-Silm*, "The House of Peace", as opposed to *Al-Gharb*, corresponding to the "Occident" and also for what means "abroad", the non-Muslim space, and its variant *Dar Al-Harb*, "The House of War".

This last differentiation persists even today only in the Islamic orthodox and radical circles for whom the Islamic area, with the statute of "territory of peace", is the realm whose kin entered the territory of peace and obedience to God, while the Occident remains a "house of war" which doesn't know the (Islamic) peace and which, sooner or later, will have to be transformed, too, through persuasion or through constraint into a "house of peace", namely Islamized.

Two concepts with a particular symbolistic and semantics for the identitarian morphology of the

Muslim man, in general, and of the Arab Muslim, in particular, are circumscribed to these coordinates: "elsewhere" and "someone else" which, transposed into spiritual dimension, correspond to the concept of "fleeing, exile" and, respectively, "otherness", or "the other" and, implicitly, the positioning of *homo islamicus* towards these concepts.

There is no stem in its own right signifying the idea of "elsewhere" in Arabic language, yet it compensates the deficiency by the abstruse formula *makān ākhar*, "another place", or *makān al-ākhar*, somebody else's place. For the beduin's tradition of looking endlessly for transhumance, pastures and water for his herd, "another place" has only an utilitarian significance connected to the abstruse daily life. Things change fundamentally when it is about the philosophical understanding of the idea of "place". The three letter stem GhRB, intervenes in this case for derivating the verb "*gharaba*" signifying "to leave, to relinquish one's habitual place" for leaving towards *Gharb*, meaning to emigrate, to flee, to become estranged. In this case, the word *Gharb*, usually understood as "the Occident" or, geographically West, will acquire the meaning of "foreign countries", of a foreign space to that of one's affiliation. The man who originally inhabits this "gharb" is a *gharīb*, a "foreigner", and the Muslim who, willy-nilly, lives there (elsewhere) where he doesn't belong, will be himself a *gharīb*, a wanderer, an exiled, an uprooted and for whom the only way to survive and continue his identity is to take with himself this estrangement (*ghurba*), his entire history, his entire religious, spiritual, customary and moral baggage. In such a reality lies one of several social, economic or of another nature causes making the Muslim migrant who has reached the hypostasis of "alienated" in a West with which he shares too few a value, to self-marginalize, to choose the periphery and, in extreme situations, to slide into religiously motivated jingoism and fanaticism. Seen from the opposite direction, "the westerner" coming to the "land of Islam" is, in his turn, a *gharīb*, a stranger with the difference that, in this case, the term acquires the meaning of "strange", "bizarre", "unnatural", attributes the exiled Mus-

lim feels with great sharpness as applicable to him by the new social environment where he had to exile himself.

On the background of this traumatic estrangement, the idea of "someone else", of otherness, of relating to "the other", is raised with even greater sharpness and the tension created by the functions of this concept is felt even more profoundly under the circumstances in which the manner he is perceived and accepted, the otherness concept has not negligible at all differences between the Western vision and the Eastern Islamic one.

In all the mentioned cases, it is about "someone else" who is not an Arab and who doesn't necessarily suppose an intense social or, non-conflictual at least, relation.

During the times closer to our contemporaneity, the Arab researchers in sociology, linguistics, ethnology and history resorted to another formula of lexical derivation for expressing the idea of otherness, starting from the idea of "other" expressed by the indefinite adjective *ghayr*, with the meaning of "someone else who does not belong to the Islamic space and ethos" and who could consequently be either a "stranger" or an "alter ego" where the idea of opposition and even conflict can be found. For the Arab consciousness, this "other" may acquire the valence of "friend", yet understood as "stranger doing you good" or, at least, "a stranger who doesn't harm you". In both hypostases, this "alter" remains, before everything, "stranger".

II. Mobility, diaspora, half-breed and identitarian reformulation

The movement, "travel/displacement" constitute, from a historical perspective, a structural element of the Arab's identity morphology. Manifest in the pre-Islamic times and, to a lesser extent, in our days, this feature took the form of cyclical nomadic lifestyle to reach its peak at the time of the "exit" from the Arabic Peninsula and the start of the great Islamic conquests. It is amazing even today the territorial amplitude of those expansions and the

vastness of the Arabization and Islamization process accompanying it in spite of the resistance met not a few times and which succeeded in the end to impose a religion, a language and a way of life that created numerous and subtle forms of cultural and identitarian half-breed. Closer to our days and until the contemporary present, a large migration process in which millions of Arabs were engaged and were pushed in this exodus by political, military and economic reasons: Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, Yemenis, Egyptians and Maghrebis were uprooted and chased from their homes either by the escalating poverty, by unemployment, by the brutal effect of conflicts or, to an equal extent, by the terrorist scourge of religious origin. The insertions in the receiving states are hierarchical: from the "refugees" status to "naturalized", passing through the stages of "conditional residence authorization" and "integrated citizens" and all these are, under any circumstance, within a general identity: "exiled" or "emigrant".

The necessity of adaptation to the structure, values and dynamics of foreign societies, the simultaneous and hardened resistance to the pressures of the new environment which requests abandoning the identitarian specificity generated and will continue to generate extreme conflicts and very complex half-breeding phenomena: the migrant – temporary or definitive – belongs, at the same time, to a space called "here" (the receiving country) and, concomitantly, through the emotional memory, to the space called "home". A "home" which, not a few times, will look at him as a "foreign co-national".

Such a migrational flow which has no chance of diminishing in a foreseeable future, generates modifications to the identitarian structure not



only of the migrants but, through a less manifest osmosis, to their relatives at home either through mimicry or through the ostility to the idea of this identity coming apart and disseminating in all corners of the planet. The contact with the technology and the non-Arabic culture, the partial adoption of the European or American way of life, the cultural half-breeding we see more and more manifest in the behavior, music, arts, determine a conflict between the new identitarian acquisitions and the atavistic desire of self-asserting a "native identity", a conflict which leads, in most of the cases, to a duplicitous symbiosis, to the creation of a personality tending to assert itself through the means offered by the "others".

III. The Occident and Islam

The massive wave of immigrants who invaded Europe especially in 2015, many of them starting from the more distant or the near East, provoked not only heated contradictory debates but also a tendency of "self-ghettoization" manifest especially by raising new curtains – of concrete and barbed wire, this time – to the geographical frontiers of the Europe's states. Part of the Europeans remembered suddenly the national identity and exploited it especially for opportunistic and populist purposes, while another part of the "European citizens" raised even higher the decibels of the discourse and in particular the bible of a pluralism, too long theorized in workshops and universities assembly rooms, yet too little known in its tangible and dynamic side. "Here we have the clash of civilizations!" one chanted and Samuel Huntington's best-seller was taken out from the drawers.

Could it be true? Has the time of war among cultures or, more rigorously expressed, among civilizations, arrived, an as menacing war, we are told, as at the foundation of each civilisation lies a religion? An answer less or at all humorally related could be offered by anthropology, the science which, proposes among others, to study the way human beings live together and interact and which did not find its well-deserved place in the Agora of the contemporary world.

We could find out this way that today's world or, more exactly, the "Old Europe" is part of a plurimorphous conflict between two distinct civilisations: the one we used to call "Western", on the one hand, and the area of Muslim civilization and which, with too much lightness, we baptized it "Oriental" even if this concept of Orient is not codified exactly semantically, culturally, geographically, historically and politically to this day. It is about two civilisations distinguishing themselves through specificities, identitarian coordinates, manners of relating themselves with the existence and otherness. Two civilizations which, since 14 centuries, do not cease to confront and look at each other with an extreme vigilance.

But, in fact, what do we have to understand from the concept of "civilization"? The question is not complimentary and an objective answer to it could facilitate a more direct approach to what we understand from the famous Huntingtonian sintagm of "clash of civilizations".

The conceptual identification of "civilization" is a more complex demarche which may, especially due to that cause, urge to expediency, is generally limiting itself to easily cognoscible benchmarks and materials such as architecture, gastronomy, garment or behavioural type, etc. Yet all these reflect, in a last analysis, a *modus vivendi*, a particular manner of thinking and relating with the transient world and with the cosmic inherent and transcendental. In a more elaborated definition, civilization "designates the assembly of spiritual, material, intellectual and affective characteristic to a human community".

In case of the contemporary "clash" of civilizations, one should notice the fact that, upon the prophet Muhammad's death, in 632 A.D., the Islamic and Christian worlds were in a perpetual conflictual dispute determined by causalities linked to doctrines, theology, territories, psychological, and, we could even say, reasons coming from the psychoanalysis realm.

By particularly referring to the doctrinary disputes, we should repeat the truism that the two great religions, Christian and Muslim, denied themselves, by insisting, each of them, on the

supremacy and the precedence when relating to each other. The Islamic scripture teaches its disciples that Muhammad's message is the highest and the last stage – synonymous with perfection – of revelation, and the Prophet himself was the last messenger of Divinity a (*khātim al-anbyā*) heralded by Christ Himself. The Quran sees in Christians people fallen in error, "people of the book" (*ahl al-kitāb*), namely Christianity adepts, inferior to Muslim man, yet tolerated because they have the merit of believing in God's unicity, as the Arabic itself is the "chosen language" and it is an immediate vector of the Divine World, the essential events of Christology are questioned or denied rightaway and, overall, the Christian world is the one that placed in history the Crusaders who conquered Jerusalem which, before Mekka and Medina, constituted the centre and "*qibla*" of the entire Muslim universe. Later, the Ottoman Muslims took over from the Arabic the term of *kāfir*-disbeliever, heretical- and applied it to the European Christianity in the Turkish form *gafur*, which circulated in the Romanian Middle Ages in the autochthonous form of *ghiaur*.

In terms of history, it is known that immediately after the Prophet's death, the crescent's warriors launched the campaigns of conquering the Christian Roman Empire and had been halted only a century later by Charles Martel in the battle of Poitiers after the former imposed the new faith to and occupied North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula up to the foothills of the Pyrenees. Crusades were to follow with all the atrocities perpetrated in the "holy land", Saladin's (Salah Eddin Al-Ayyubi) victories, the ascent and the

history of the Ottoman caliphate that spread on- to the European geography to the gates of Vienna and which came to an end at the beginning of the XXth century through Kemal Atatürk's reform who abolished the institution of the caliph and the Islamic caliphate and brought, for the first time in the East, the republican regime.

All this long history laden with religious and military conflicts left obviously its footprint on the Islamic spirit and subconscious which, anchored in its own past and in the aura of legends, is claiming, once it entered the Western world area, the right to its own spiritual, religious and cultural supremacy. And, as the anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss noticed, "from this hostility between two civilisation areas, the germ of a new civilisation, half-breed, tired and disoriented will emerge sooner or later".

IV. Europe: a second Islamic conquest?

There were not a few historians who accredited the idea that were it not Charles Martel's Frankish armies to halt the advance of the Ommayad Muslim armies in the famous battle of Tours, near Poitiers in 732, next centuries' Europe had become a great Muslim emirate, had studied the Quran in its great university and academy establishments and the Christian Western values had vanished under the dust of time. Today, under the impulse of the wave of Muslim emigrants heading towards Europe from the "land of Islam", there are as many voices stating that the old continent is facing the existential danger of a new Muslim conquest carried out this time not with the sword and the shield but in the peaceful

manner of the protection offered by the bankruptcy of the wishful thinking of the pluralism and multiculturalism and the integration of the Christian Western civilisation into a syncretic mixture where Islam would dictate the law, would impose the way of life and would shape the ideals of the new European man who is to become "homo islamicus". New concepts and syntagms such as "Islamophobia", "Islamization of Europe", "clash of civilisations" and, ulti-



mately, the “death of Europeism” penetrated the political and sociological rhetoric and were fostered not only by the shock of the Salafist terrorism that befell in a bloody and irrational manner the Western Christianity but, to the same extent, by the ascendancy of the radical currents and political formations – of the extreme right or left – who see in the “Muslim danger” a generous source of electoral capital and a fertile ground for implementing and proliferating their ideological and political doctrines and programs in the struggle for power in the state and society.

The European citizen’s fears are not lacking arguments having in mind the perspective that, in 2-3 decades, the Islamic religion and the continental demography become majority. Statistics at the end of 2017 drawn up by earnest centers and institutes of analysis and research of the phenomenon emphasize the reality that the Islamic inflow into the continent is on a continuous rise and during one year only the percentage of the Islamic population in the European societies raised from 4.6% at the end of 2016 to more than 5% at the end of last year and estimate a twice as big an increase, of more than 10%, at the horizon of 2050.

It would be an inexcusable proof of blindness if not of unconscious hypocrisy if the public opinion, Europe’s political elites and governments, use this false alternative of the contemporary humanism and of the multiculturalism, which proved its dysfunctionality or its detrimental functionality, as arguments for denying an existing and active reality: that within the European frontiers the tensions and animosities among the non-Muslim natives and the allogeneous Muslims are manifest on an ascending trajectory. And that is due, in integrum, to an alleged racist and chauvinistic feeling hostile to the Islamic migrant influx, born overnight, while it has its roots in the visible and tangible reality of aggressions, rapes, crimes, hooliganism and the sovereign contempt of the Muslim migrants for the behavioral values, concepts and paradigms of the receiving societies. And the perspective is not encouraging at all and has two alternatives



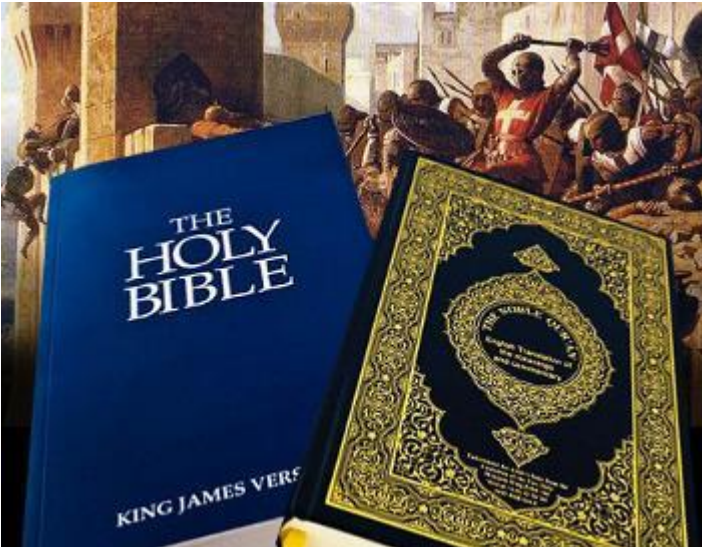
only, first of all for the European community: either by improving the situation through measures imposed necessarily not by a new Charles Martel, or the entire situation gets out of control and the European values system slides into an endless plaintive and helpless lament of which the Muslims would not bother, before the others.

The Europeans who are still convinced that for cutting this Gordian knot suffices to proceed with expelling all Muslims, with turning the inner or outer borders into defensive walls are wrong as are the Muslim utopians who aspire to turn Europe into a new Islamic caliphate.

The discussion about normality and peaceful and constructive living together assumes first of all identifying and formulating an unequivocal answer to the question whether the Islamic migration – from individual to the Muslim migrants community – is really compatible with the idea of integration, participation, coexistence and mutual respect for the values. In an article dedicated to this topic and hosted by “Geostrategic Pulse” in its issue No. 247 of October 2017, we questioned the realism of such a perspective by answering “NO” to all identified hypostasis and we take the liberty of reminding them now:

- No, from the Islamic and theological identitarian perspective as for this the only existential reference is Allah who preconditions the individual’s existence ante and post-mortem and from here the unique system of behavioral system – shari’a derives;

- No, from the religious point of view to the extent the scripture and the exegesis ordain that Islam is the last and superior stage of the divine revelation, Mohammed is *khātim al-anbiyā’* (the



last of the historical chain of profetism heralded, according to tradition, by Christ Himself), while the Arabic language, in which the Logos of Transcendancy materializes, is the “chosen language”). The idea of the superiority of the religious, cultural and moral Islam over other religions and civilisations is the fundamental feature of the Islamic identitarian structure. From this conclusion ensues the sentence, advocated by most Muslim ideologues and theorist, and particularly those who preach Salafism, according to which “the meaning of Islam is to rule” – everything from individual, society, state to the global Muslim community;

- The same answer applies to the ideological dimension: Islam, being integrator and exclusivist, does not recognize as valid any other ideology except the one resulting from the word of Allah-God;

- No, in the spiritual dimension for, “being superior by its descendancy, Islam pretends that everything that does not belong to *dār al-islām*, to the “House of Islam”, is inferior, “infidel”, and, by consequence, cannot be compatible with the reform except by willingly or forcibly adopting Islam, the only hypostasis through which the individual may become *Al-Insān Al-Kāmil*, namely “perfect man”, “universal man”;

- No, from a social standpoint since the Islamic exegesis forbids friendship relations with a non-Muslim, namely an “infidel”. For the Islamic man, the “notion of friend” (*sāhib*) designates ad

-litteram the “alien who does not harm you”, the companion with whom the relations do not exceed the limit of utility, for moving to the affective realm the “friendship” entails in other non-Muslim cultures and civilizations;

- No, from a juridical outlook as the unique codex ruling the behavior and the existence of a Muslim is the Divine Law – shari’ia, from which devolve all the other obligations that are the “pillars” supporting man’s and society’s identity – from the ritual of prayers, the pilgrimage to Islam’s sacred places, to the place of woman in the family and society to the culinary and dress rules, solving the disputes and misunderstandings. Due to that, there are not a few cases in which the Muslim immigrants communities in the western societies militate for sanctioning shari’a as a parallel juridical system to the civil and criminal codes of the host states. And that means generally non recognizing the constitutions and the laws of the receiving states;

- No, from a political, social and axiological standpoint: the western values are, for the devout Muslim, corrupt and atheistic and concepts such as freedom of expression, democracy, human rights and so on are “bastard creatures” of the “deviationist” western civilization given that according to the “fundamental scripture”, man is free only within the extent Allah decides in this regard, democracy allows the dictatorship of a majority over a minority, freedom of expression means the possibility for the individual of expressing ideas and concepts that are not stipulated in the sacred texts and thus violates Allah’s sovereign will.

It is obvious that no one in the western culture requires a Muslim emigrant to give up his own values criteria in order to adopt the ones of the receiving societies and cultures. *The only thing required from these migrants is not giving up their own identitarian structure but the minimal effort of not willing deliberately to impose it over the values and civilization of the receiving country, including by civil insubordination, violence and terrorism.* An effort which, for the time being, the militant Muslim migrants do not show con-

vincingly they are ready to accept”.

V. What's to be done?

Contrary to the social and values landscape offered by the European family until the middle of last century, today's Europe is characterized more and more visibly (and more and more aggressively) by an invasive pluralism and by a spiritual syncretism in which the Islamic reality represents one of the defining components. By asserting itself more and more noisier and offensively, the “European Islam” has the perspective of becoming in a not far away future, one of the main disturbing factors of a secular European community anchored in a deep identitarian crisis. And this situation is not due fundamentally to the migration phenomenon only – irrespective of its causes – or to the Muslim women's high birth rates, but rather supported by what could be called “re-Islamisation” of the Muslim communities in Europe: the generations of inter-war and post-war migrants were driven by rather than otherwise material reasons and less or at all by considerations and urges of religious and cultural sort. Yet, on the background of post-war developments in Europe and of the western society in general, they turned from cheap “labor” into a ghettoized “proletariat”, marginalised and disappointed and under such circumstances, they developed the urge of turning back to their origins, to the identitarian consciousness and particularly to the feeling of affiliation to the Islamic religion. From consciences' awakening to claiming a social statute in which this identity becomes the only possible law was but a step through which many of these disinherited fell pray to an intense campaign of insidious and anarchic “re-Islamisation” taught by the preachers of the religious radicalism and extremism. And, a no less dangerous and harmful aspect was that, alongside the “imported Muslims”, the European communities allowed out of indifference or out of opportunism the emergence of their own class of “Islamized” equally rebels and anti-social out of whom the ideology and the ultra-religious propaganda generated the cohorts of “jihadists onto Allah's path” sought after and used either

on the fronts in Syria and Iraq or against their own native social environment. It is this background that allows the statement that, whether so far Europe has met at home with “Muslims”, now it meets, at home, too, with the Islam itself.

Faced with these realities and as a first step to halt sliding into the apocalyptic rhetorics which is, not a few times, self-righteous and cynical, too, of the disappearance of the old continent under the green banner, a first step which should be made is to courageously and honestly acknowledge the fact that the manner in which the European elites approached and continue to approach the “new Europe threatened with losing its identity” – was as erroneous as it was dangerous.

- First, it is about a sovereign ignorance of the specificities through which Islam defines and individualize itself. Instead of proclamations with obvious populist touches according to which “Islam is not a religion”, it would have been more rational and beneficial to accept that Islam is a religion and, at the same time, an ideology and an essential coordinate outside which the Islamic man ceases to exist as such;

- Second, it is about a defective application, on Islamic societies and thought, of the measurement criteria and the system of values lying at the very foundation of the European civilisations, especially in what regard the individual, the society and the relations between the two;

- Third, it is about the conceptual and pragmatic drawing up and disseminating of the pluralism, multiculturalism and multiconfessionalism, a concept built rather around the idea of collectivity and less or at all around the individual as part of this collectivity. The very terms with which the theory and practice of pluralism operates are not clearly defined when it is about the finality of this living in plurality: it is integration sometimes, some other times is assimilation or adoption. And the result of this formal vice is rather well known: the form this multicultural and multiconfessional “new Europe” did not generate in reality either assimilation, integration or adoption;

- Whether Europe is “condemned” to live to-

gether with the Islamic challenge, the same Europe has the duty to use the social, economic, educational, communicational and institutional leverages for making that this “unavoidable Islam” become an “European Islam” with “European Muslim” citizens and not an Islam made up of a mosaic of isolated, confused communities and, particularly, strongly influenced by the regimes in their countries of origin or by false prophets preaching an alleged “new Islam” which uses the scripture for inciting the racial, religious and cultural hatred. Such an Islam should find in the adoption societies open doors for a functional social, political and cultural co-existence.



The scaremongering sparked by the topic of Islamization of the old continent is interpreted in tonalities suggesting that the European society and its values are victims reconciled with their fate passively waiting for being Islamized. The political elites and the collective mind should show that – through offensive actions and, when needed, through steps assuming the recourse to Constitution, to law and to criminal code – that Europe, Europeanism and its system of values are not the helpless lamb sacrificed during Ramadhan feasts but the strong pillar supporting an old, solid and perennial contribution to the evolution of the universal civilisation.

The “Islamization of Europe” will not be halted by the famous “decatalogue of fighting Islam” launched by the Dutch radical Geert Wilders and patched together with syntagms close to if not synonymous with extremism (stipulating the Judeo-Christian character of the Western European civilisations into constitutions, complete denial of the existence of Islam as religion, *forced* assimilation of extra-European minorities, mass expulsion of emigrants etc).

The Islamization of Europe will not be halted either by building mosques with extravagant architecture or banning them as well as banning the Muslim educational and charitable establishments except such prohibition being based on proven arguments and being in accordance with the law (which should be amended by including among “crimes” against the society all manifestations of propaganda, indoctrination, defamation and violation of the values and norms of the social life in the receiving societies).

Halting the migration phenomenon could not be achieved either through the maternalism practiced by Chancellor Angela Merkel who proposed, as anti-Islamizing therapy, that migrants be offered song festivals and presents brought by Santa Claus.

VI. THE EUROPEAN UNION

BETWEEN THE “EUROPEAN ISLAM” AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

Confronted with the “Islamic challenge”, Europe is in a paradoxical situation. The brutal surges of terrorism which shocked during the last years the cities of the continent should have been understood as an impetus for an increased and comprehensive political union and solidarity and, on this background, for initiating an ample and consistent debate not only on the security measures for counteracting the “Islamic terrorist phenomenon” but, with the same determination, on the prospects of the interlinking between the European community and the challenge of Islamization which, discussed in closed circles and in ivory towers, did nothing but in-





creased, at the level of societies, the feeling of uncertainty and fear which, unchecked or untreated with an appropriate therapy, determined the orientation of the collective mind towards a quite different direction – namely towards xenophobia and an exacerbated Islamophobia. That, in its turn, determined, at the level of the public opinion, the cristalization and the enforcement of the counter-productive idea that the European Union should self-isolate and turn into a fortress detached from the rest of the global community. On the other hand, the migration waves continue and, in all likelihood, they wouldn't stop soon. And if this tide cannot be stoped, it should be instead contained with enough firmness, prudence and continuity so that other undesirable social turbulences and some cultural and confessional destabilising consequences be avoided.

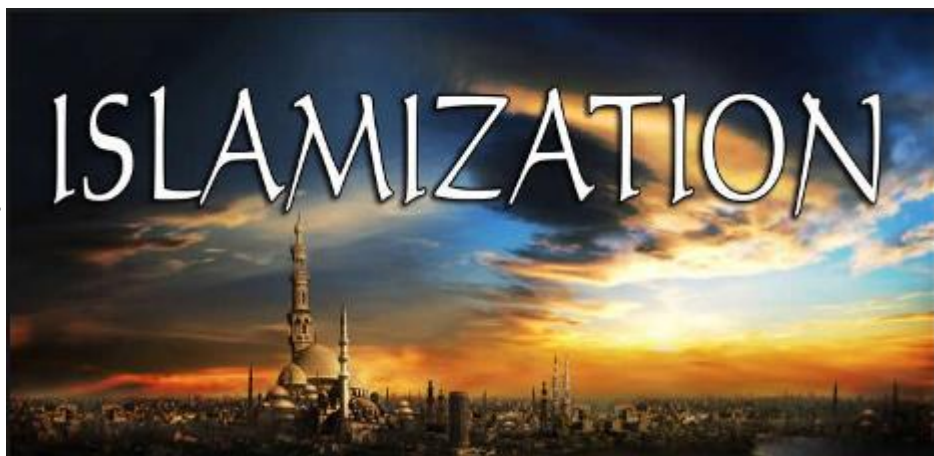
Europe becomes more and more a multiethnic, multiconfessional and multicultural community. Yet, if this Europe doesn't prove its will and its capacity of edifying a sustainable space of coexistence, it will risk triggering a rhetorics about the very validity and continuity of the European project, about the credibility of the higher aspirations of the Europe's nations and about the future of the cultural heritage the Europe's civilisation is built on.

It is above any doubt that the

emigrants' shocking dramas, chased by wars and violations of human dignity are naturally inducing the idea of a moral and humanitarian duty of assisting those uprooted. And this compassion was manifest on a large scale by thousands of European citizens who volunteered remarkably for helping those leaving for exile. The officials and decision-makers in the European capitals are still unable, through their work, to compensate the short-sidedness of the Council of Europe's political vision.

It is compulsory for Brussels to supersede the Dublin Regulation which leaves to the European national states the entire responsibility for solving the migration they are confronted with. Today, Europe should develop and actively contribute to implementing a multifarious strategy for bringing the wars in Syria, in Libya and other hotbeds of brutal conflicts to a halt. But peace and – implicitly – draining the migration flow towards Europe assumes as well fighting poverty, access to education and health. And it supposes, too, an extremely important element, namely that Brussels's initiatives will not reach its pre-established target unless all the European Union's citizens become conscious of this dire need and back their representatives in Brussels. Namely to the extent Europe, first, returns more actively and more determined to its own identitarian values defining it.

And, for that, it is high time to remember the assesment of the living spirit who was the historian Arnold Toynbee: "a civilisation cannot be assassinated. It commits suicide out of indifference".





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CONSIDERATION

Syria – the Third World War does not start on Twitter

Corneliu PIVARIU

Some days after the American president Donald Trump announced it on Twitter, more exactly on the night of Friday to Saturday, April 14th at 04.00 Damascus time, the USA, Great Britain and France launched a missiles attack (Tomahawk and other air-to-ground bomber launched missiles) on punctual targets (one on the Damascus outskirts and two in Homs region) belonging to the chemical weapons program of Bashar Al-Assad's regime. Readers can look at a more detailed analysis in the Supplement to this issue while here we make some consideration concerning the global and regional geopolitical situation following this last allied attack as well as on the possible consequences.

Although there were several guesstimates that the attack will take place at the end of April, it happened a short time after the American president's declaration, this time probably in connection with the recent internal events in the USA. For the British prime minister Theresa May and for the French president Emmanuel Macron, too, the act represented a good opportunity for improving their favourable ratings and public appreciation.

As it was anticipated, the strike was more powerful than the April, 2017 one and proved the USA president's resolution (and of the allies) of not tolerating the use of chemical arms by the Syrian regime as Barack Obama did in 2013, when crossing "the red line" set by the American administration itself was not penalised.

In fact, the Syrian regime led by the Assad's has benefited, along the history, from the lack of reaction of the international community over the atrocities perpetrated against their own population and we mention here only the February 1982 massacre in Hama when the army and the security troops killed around 40,000 inhabitants of the town that was closed, as it was destroyed in a great part, for almost a year. In this context, we consider that the 14th of April 2018 strike was not decisive in determining Assad's regime to not further bomb its own population.

We noticed the USA's and allies' concern of not "*scratching any of the Russian soldiers*" as some analysts appreciated after the strike. For the matter, this is better emphasized by the fact that another facility of the Syrian chemical program, situated in the mountaneous area of Lattakia region, was not hit having in mind its proximity to the Russian base in Hmeimim. We note also that, according to some sources, the radars of the Russian systems of missiles were shut down (probably for avoiding incidents). A Russian source appreciated that April 14th "*was a very good day for president Putin*", as it showed that Russia is dealt with carefully, contrary to the declaration (that might be considered as a little too unusual for a democratic state) of the Russian ambassador in the USA according to whom the attack represented an insult to the Russian president.

On that occasion, the USA regained some of its lost role of important international arbiter and is being repositioning itself as an important player in Syria, even if the strike is not sufficient in this regard. NATO proves anew that it is an strong alliance having resources to overcome difficult moments. France will probably strengthen its position in Syria (most likely in the north-east of the country), while Great Britain will continue to be an important USA's ally in the Middle East.

The dispute will continue with diplomatic, political and other nature means (the digital activity of the Russian trolls increased already by 2,000% 24 hours after the attack). A resolution of condemning the attack submitted by Russia was vetoed by the Security Council (with 8 votes majority with Russia, China and Bolivia only voting in favor), something that was expected indeed.

The impromptu opinion of a source in Damascus is very interesting as he said, before the attack, that the analysts had different opinions considering it to be on a small scale, big or extended or it will not be at all, while he considered it was "*quite petty*" and added that the Syrians have been passing through more difficult moments and manifested his trust in the future actions of Assad's regime.

Reiterating Syria's regional geostrategic importance and its probably ample energy reserves not harnessed yet, it is our opinion that, on a short run, the Third World War will not start from Syria.

The Main Factors of the Middle East Situation

THE MIDDLE EAST: BACK TO THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Ambassador prof. Dumitru CHICAN foreign “assistance”.

Since almost a decade or, more exactly since the metaphorical “spring” of the Arab world broke out, the Middle East has been witnessing a historical period where evolutions and involutions are succeeding each other rapidly and with difficult to foresee consequences both in what concern politics and the manner it materializes militarily making difficult and, most of the time, imprecise most of the analysts’ endeavours to issue value judgements, prognoses and predictions with reasonable validity at least on a medium term.

The researchers and chroniclers who looked introspectively at the great transformations generated by the “Arab spring” phenomenon were unanimous in advancing the conclusion that politically and geostrategically, two realities with axiomatic value were emphasized. First, it is about the fact that all turbulences, conflicts and contortions which unfolded within the national states had a much bloodier character than all the other turbulences with regional dimension. The internal conflicts that degenerated in civil wars engulfed Arab states such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya while in other regional states sliding into the flames of civil war was avoided either by external force intervention, as was the case of the Kingdom of Bahrein where, on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Organisation, the neighbouring Arab monarchies headed by Saudi Arabia intervened militarily for halting the steamroller of the “Arab spring” or by the military’s coming out in the public space as was the Egypt’s case. In all these situations, the violent manifestations and, generally the factors that fostered the crises had, within the respective state, a political, social, economic, sectarian and ideological real cause and the outside interventions were “legitimised” by the appeals launched to this purpose by the domestic regimes or forces having the potential of mobilising and backing

Second, it is about the fact that as a direct result of the domestic tensions, the state and its functional institutions lost the role and the potential of manifesting themselves as an active political factor both domestically and in the context of regional and international interlinking. Such a situation facilitated the emergence, beside the state’s institutions, of other tensioning factors and players involved in the conflict such as, for instance, the activism of the Islamist conservative movement of the “Muslim Brotherhood” or the radical entities inspired by the latter ideology and doctrine, from Al-Qaida network to the ultra-radical “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria”. And the common denominator of all these parallel factors was to be found in particular in the program of using the state and its resources for undermining it and building its own state achieved temporarily by instituting the so-called Muslim “caliphate” in Syria and Iraq, a cross-border “state” based on ignoring the political geography as it was set up at the end of WWI by a colonial type agreement between France and Great Britain. Paradoxically and surprisingly and in spite of the quasi-total congruity among the programs, doctrinary and ideological background of the purpose pursued – the revival of the Islamic global caliphate and worldwide dissemination of the true Islamic “faith” – these “secondary but active players” could not avoid conflicts, most of them brutal and blood tainted, among them, on the one hand, and the movement of the “Muslim Brotherhood”, on the other hand.

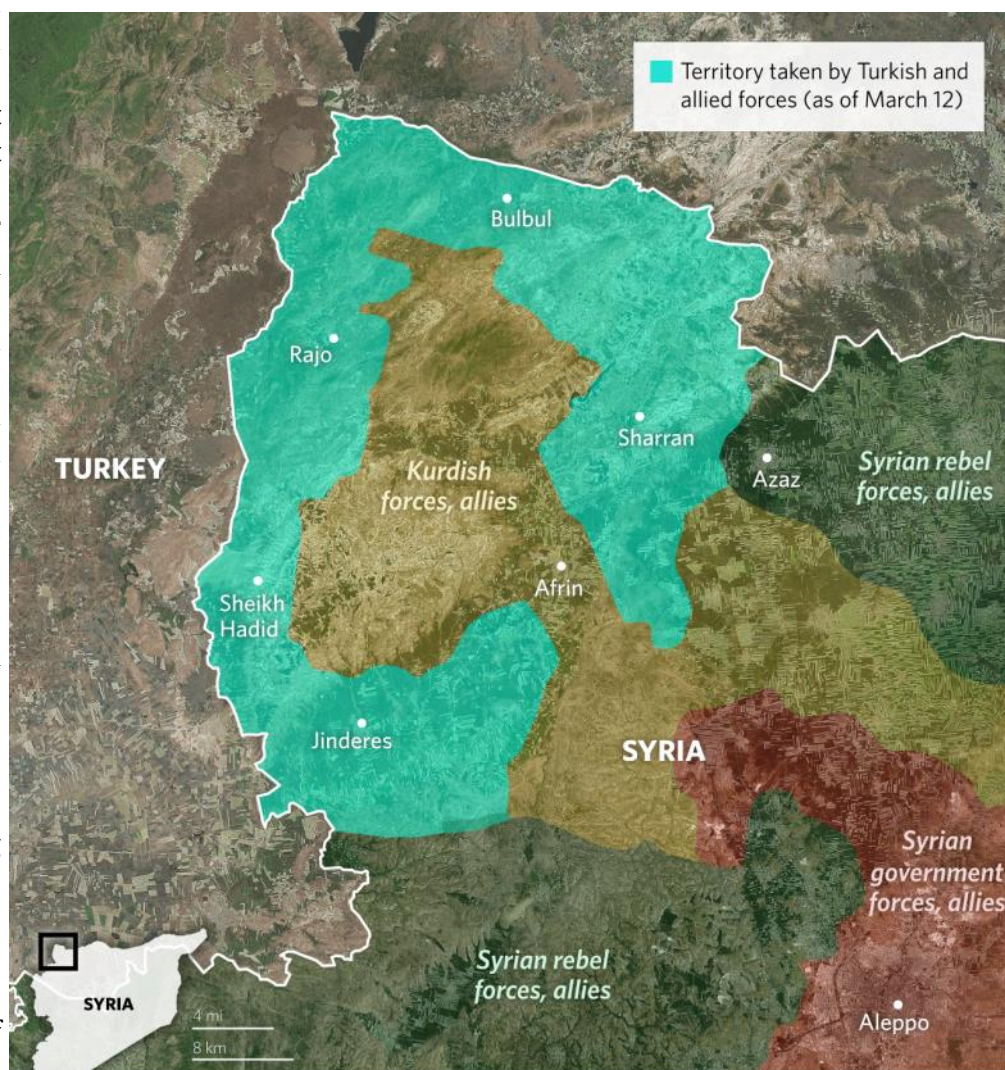
The crises, conflicts and civil wars in the Middle East after the “Arab spring” had, nevertheless, moments closer to reason and to reinstating peace that were called, according to circumstances, either “detente” and “de-escalation” or “cease-fire” and “truces” with variable delays and were the result of either activating the polit-

ical and diplomatic mechanisms in a bitter and complicated competition where the main players involved were the United States, the Russian Federation and the influential regional players or having the “good-offices” role – the United Nations and its Security Council. At the same time, on the background of the steep regress witnessed by the Islamist jihadist and terrorist activism, the institutional states are following a slow trajectory of political and identity reconstruction that opens, for the time being, at least discursively, the way to a peace, normality and reconstruction perspective. The Iraqi state succeeded, with the United States’ assistance, to get rid to a good extent of the nightmare of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi’s “caliphate” and endeavours to reconstruct its identity structure and political and social harmony. After several years of civil war, Bashar Al-Assad’s state – which became a subject of international and regional discord and tension – seems to come back closer to peace, yet conditional to a great extent on the way the two players and bitter contenders – America and the Russian Federation – will agree upon the Syrian state’s survival and form – sovereign and united or crumbled in its own political geography – in which it will continue to exist.

The Middle East remains prisoner to a landscape where the regional states are engaged in an increased interventionist and competitive policy. During the last years, the Islamic Republic of Iran resorted to promoting the Shia ideology and the expansion of Khomeiny’s revolution

and to secondary players having crossborder dimensions and range of actions: the “Popular Mobilisation” militias in Iraq, Hezbollah in Syria and Lebanon, the rebels of the Houthis in Yemen. Currently, the Islamic regime in Tehran is not limiting itself to wage wars by proxies but it is directly involved through the Iranian Revolutionary Guard of the Islamic Revolution, and one of the objectives sought after and officially recognized is to secure a transit corridor through Iraq, Syria and Lebanon up to the borders neighbouring Israel and using such geostrategic positioning as mechanism of approaching the existing tensions in its relations with the American Administration of Donald Trump.

In its turn, Recep Teyyip Erdogan’s Turkey manifested more visibly its interventionist intentions of military sort on the background of

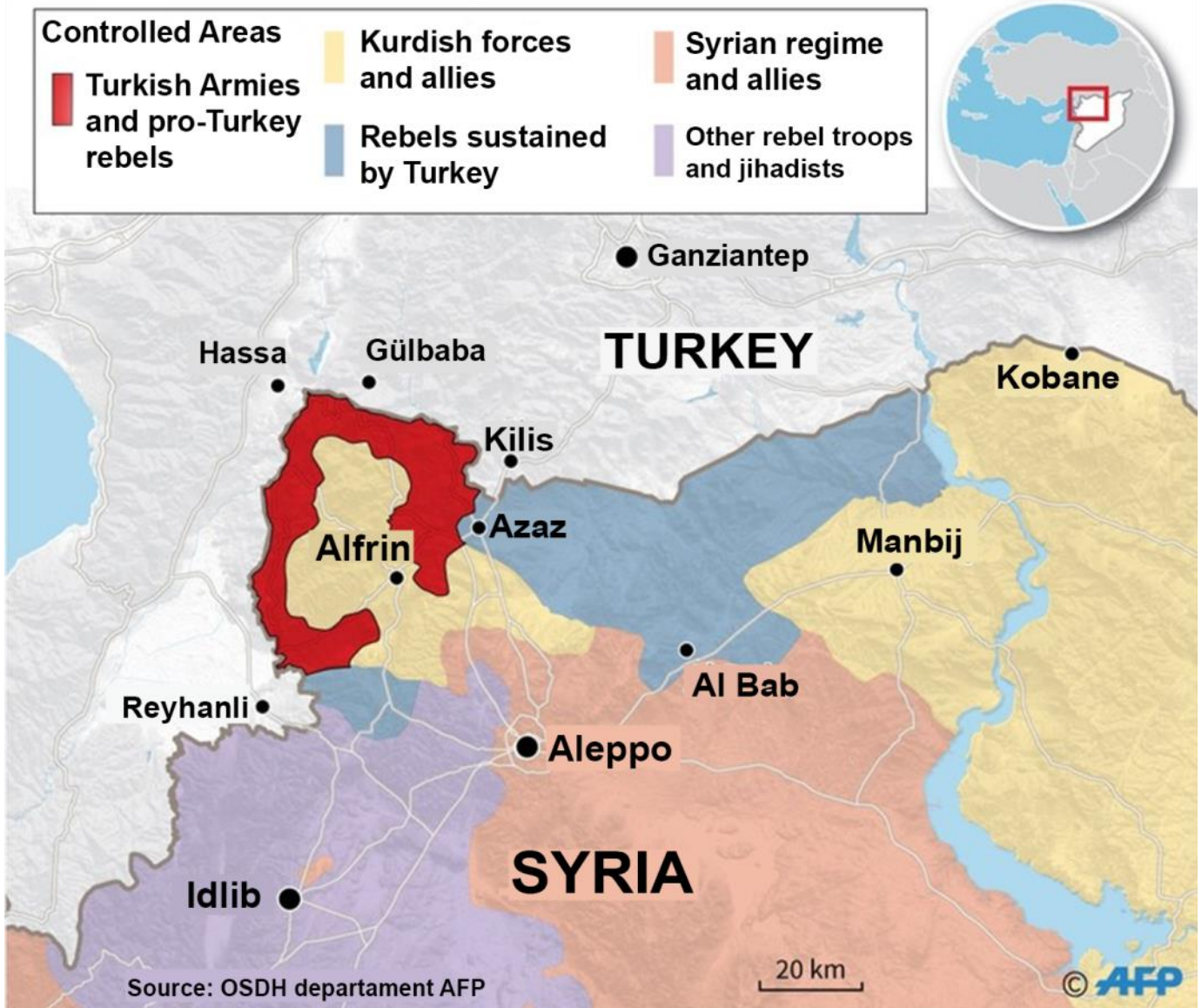


the multi-state campaign of eradicating of the terrorist group “Islamic State” yet has an objective of its own generated, according to Ankara’s official discourse, by interests pertaining to national security: preventing the “Kurdish terrorism” from setting up in Syria a state entity of its own at Turkey’s borders, something that in Ankara’s vision represents a threat to the national security, stability and internal sovereignty. This Turkish geopolitical vision, backed by the doctrine of the “national security interests” materialized in Turkey’s armed interventions either code-named Euphrates Shield Operation, justified by the imperative of halting the Syrian Kurds’ advance west of the Euphrates River or

Olive Branch Operation, substantiated by preventing the Kurds’ advance towards the extreme north-west of the Syrian territory along the alignment of the strategic towns Afrin – Manbij, close to the Turkish frontier.

The Middle East returns gradually to the traditional geopolitical approaches whereby the obsessions related to the concept of “national security” are prevalent in a region “internationalised” by the complexity and cross-border amplitude of the crises and conflicts. Realities which, for a long time have been circumvented or trunkated are now being named more directly and less rhetorically. Thus, the civil war

Turkish offensive in Afrin



in Yemen is seen less as a result of the games under way on the global geopolitical stage and more as a result of the Saudi and Iranian interventionism involved in a bitter franchise war with regional sectarian and hegemonic connotations.

Israel looked, for a long time, with icy detachment at the crisis in Syria and preferred its perpetuation and Bashar Al-Assad's staying in power having in mind that since the October 1973 war, Syria proved to be a steadfast guardian of quiet and peace of the separation line on the Golan Heights. Or, today's Syria has changed not in what concern its weight in the general process of the Arab-Israeli conflict but precisely in connection with Iran's threats represented by its militias in Syria and Lebanon directly for the same "national security interests". It is not any longer about tensions between the Jewish state and Hamas or the terrorists of Syrian Al-Qaida but about the prospect of a menacing direct Israeli-Iranian confrontation, much more serious as one of the stakes involved is the competition between the two states for the control and influence of the future Syria.

More recently, another conflictual subject has come to the fore and it is about the economic factor represented by oil and gas discoveries in the southern area of Eastern Mediterranean.

The world of the Middle East comes back to the traditional geopolitics with all its political, military and economic elements defining the national interests of the states. The 2018 Middle East is not any more the Middle East of the "Arab spring". And the effects of these upheavals are in an incipient stage only.

THE MIDDLE EAST OR PEACE AS BUSINESS

Dinu COSTESCU

When the businessman Donald Trump swapped the business world for politics at the highest level and became "the most powerful president in the world", he left behind Barack Obama's legacy and a long American tradition concerning Amer-

ica's role and its relations with this part of the world where we are all equals while "America first" is, nevertheless, "primus inter pares". From the era preceding him, Mr Donald Trump kept, as an identitarian effigy, the quality, the mentality and love for what changes his name in reputation: the syntagm "big deal". And one of the first practical tests of this change had as experimentation object the Middle East and its pacification, conceived as the "biggest deal of the century". Some jubilated, some kept pondering over, hand at the head, some others eulogised in hyperboles the breeze of novelty announced by Donald Trump. At least as far as the Arab world of the Middle East is concerned, everyone involved went gently over a truth otherwise very well known: namely that the history of this Middle East was not only a continuously open conflictual stage to wars but also a long path of attempts to bring peace and coexistence to the area, yet an objective devised every time in accordance with the canons of a "big deal". "The biggest deal" promised by Donald Trump is, until proven otherwise, just adding a signature to the existing ones, many of which are kept already in the drawer of oblivion.

Before inviting the reader to a short recollection, mention should be made to the fact, which is not irrelevant, that if there is a problem in the Middle East's equation, it is to be found in the absolute lack of knowledge of all predecessors of the "big deals" of peace in this part of the world, of the profound realities and causalities of the conflicts succeeding one another and that they did not strive to find their real causes so that the "issue of the Middle East" became a mere abstraction studied rather than otherwise theoretically for identifying ideal solutions, distant from the living realities. That was the assumption from where the journey of the "big deals" we are talking about started immediately after the end of WWII and the pioneer was the British prime minister Clement Atlee, who focussed the interest of the British policy on Palestine (or Greater Syria, as the Levant was called during the Ottoman Turkish caliphate). In Atlee's vision, the shock therapy for solving the "Palestinian issue" was to annex part of historical Palestine to Jor-

dan and the rest of the same historical Palestine was to be shared among the Arab states members of the then recently created Arab League, the latter being supporters, of course, of the Empire of His British Majesty. It happened that the "Atlee plan" met with fierce opposition of Harry Truman's American Administration who considered himself one of the "peace makers" ordained to be raised to nobility – as Matthew Gospel says – with the statute of "children of God". As it was too far away from the "front", America was outperformed by the promptness of other peace-makers – the British Mark Sykes and the French François- Georges Picot – who, without being businessmen, divided the post-war Middle East and opened the way to the promise Lord Balfour was to make in 1917 and who, on behalf of His Majesty, expressed the entire support for setting up in Palestine "a national home for the Jewish people". That will take place in 1948 by the creation of the State of Israel, a moment which unfortunately, as the result of the reaction of the Arab community, the first armed Arab-Israeli conflict broke out and the long and complicated "Middle East conflict" begun. After the previous failures of Atlee, Truman, Sykes, Picot and Balfour, another messenger of peace, impersonated by the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, intervened in 1947 and handed the "peace deal" to the the United Nation's responsibility. The Organisation assumed the same year the role of "peacemaker" in the world of the Middle East and, by resolution No. 181, drew up in its turn a "deal of the century" and recommended the creation, in Palestine, of two states – Jewish and Arab -, a "deal" that failed when the then members of the Organisation rejected the resolution No. 181 or abstained from voting. Instead of acknowledging its failure, the Organisation chosed to carry on its pacifying role this time by means of its General Secretaries (and peace envoys to the region) from the Swede Gunnar Jarring to Kurt Waldheim until instituting the position of "special international envoy" for the peace process in the Middle East. Most of them declared optimistically they were close of accomplishing the mission for recognizing later they were defeated or gave up altogether the mission they were entrusted with.

Until the 1970s, the political and military discourse had in its lexical portfolio the syntagm the "Arab-Israeli conflict" justified by the four wars (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973) that stained the region with blood – a period in which the diplomacy of "small steps" initiated by the "peacemaker" Henry Kissinger, nicknamed the "New Metternich" was in vogue and promoted a tactic of "reshuffling the cards during the poker game" – while his peace remained, as ever since, a very remote dream only. After the 1973 war, succeeded by the conclusion of peace treaties between Israel and two Arab states – Egypt and Jordan – the "Arab-Israeli conflict" was rarely used until its quasi-extinction and the discourse about peace was referring to the "peace between the Palestiniand and the Israelis". Under the pressure of the first wave of popular revolts (Intifada), Bill Clinton succeeded in a multilateral framework (Russia, America, the European Union) the conclusion of the Oslo Agreements in 1993 through which the Israelis and the Palestinians agreed upon a sham sort of peace. Enters the German Chancellor Angela Merkel trying in her turn to play the role of peacemaker for willingly giving it up later and on the Palestinian file the shadow and dust of oblivion settled for a long time. The "peace adventure" was impulsively updated by Donald Trump whose decision of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's sole and eternal capital brought him from the Palestinians the denial of any role of the Administration in Washington to play the new role of dove of peace with no chance for this "big deal" to ever become a reality.

Many a cause explains the failures witnessed by this endless procession along the thorny road towards peace and calm between the Arabs and the Jews, in general, and between the Palestinian Arabs and the State of Israel, in particular.

As with other numerous large-scale conflicts the history witnessed, the experience of peace in the Middle East is subject to the same laws stipulating that peace should not be the fruit of negotiations on an equal footing and achieved in good will but rather an effect imposed by the conqueror on the defeated one and on terms dictated by the stronger or, under certain circumstances, by

a third party outside the conflict proper, yet seeking its own interests devolving from the conflict. Such a peace cannot be either acceptable nor lasting as the history of the peace process in the Middle East provides abundant proof. In the United States' concrete case, the interests we are talking about are related not only to the political prestige but also to electoral calculations trying to get the most profitable answer to the question: how to win the votes of the Jewish electorate without that upsetting, at the same time, the economic and strategic relations with the Arab world?

To an equal extent, in no similar situation one can talk of achieving a real peace if the direct involved parties in the dispute do not accept it and consider it unjust and against one's specific interests. The best attainable goal under such circumstances will materialize in a more or less functional sort of "neither peace, nor war" or in a truce on an indefinite term allowing a partial normality, at least apparent, such as the case of the relations between Syria and Israel after the last two wars of June 1967 and October 1973, which continues to prove that "peace does not mean the absence of war only".

One may find out that most of the "businessmen" involved in "dealing" with peace and war in the Middle East belong to other coordinates of the political geography and to other areas of civilisation and culture and this reality generates inevitably a question which answer is known since a long time: "where are the Arab world's peacemakers"? We have found three possible examples only which, being exceptions, do nothing but confirm the rule. First, it is about Anwar El-Sadat of Egypt who had the guts to go to the Knesset and make

peace with Israel. How was Sadat rewarded? With a firestorm of bullets shot by Egyptian machine guns wielded by Egyptian brains and hands. And, since that was not enough, the "Arab brethren", united in their feelings and thoughts, expelled Egypt from the Arab League's membership!

Second, it is about the famous 2002 "Arab peace initiative" launched by Saudi Arabia which offered the recognition of the State of Israel in exchange of its withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands and of setting up a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem. What was the result? The initiative remained a dead letter and the recognition of the State of Israel needs but a juridical codification, not dependent on the issue of the Middle East "conflict". Indeed, we can't ignore indeed the late King Hussein Bin Talal of Jordan who, on the footsteps of his Egyptian predecessor, made peace in 1994 with his Jewish neighbours by signing the Treaty of Wadi Araba, a treaty which, due to the difficulties of observing and implementing it, looks rather like an armistice keeping the war away.

"Blessed are the peacemakers..." Here it comes Donald Trump's big deal. *Salam, Shalom, Mr President!*



IRAN AND ITS MILITIAS IN SYRIA

Reza SHAHRESTANII

I

Two of the fundamental coordinates of the Islamic revolution in Iran as set out by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeiny and which became major components of the regional foreign policy of the new theocratic regime in Tehran were, first, the regional “export” of revolution as prerequisite of Iran’s influence expansion in the political geography of the regional proximity and, second, the hostility towards the Jewish state which, in the end and in accordance with Khomeinist rhetorics, should be wiped out from the map of the Middle East.

In a long period lasting to this day, the main instrument the Iranian strategy and doctrine resorted to was framing and waging the so-called “proxies war” or “franchise wars” which, in a simplified definition, means edifying a network of groups, organisations, military and paramilitary forces acting outside the national territory, namely within the targetted states of the expansionist and sectarian Shia doctrine, and have the mission of generating a sui-generis alternative of “constructive anarchy” meant to create the propitious conditions and climate for attracting the respective states into the sphere of influence and absolute control of the Islamic Republic of Iran, animated by the aspiration to obtain the statute of regional player and of active player on the geopolitical and geostrategic games of the global world.

The Palestinian Hamas organisation, which emerged in 1978 as Palestinian ideological offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, and the Lebanese political and military formation Hezbollah, set up in 1982, in southern Lebanon, benefitted, to varying degrees, of Iran’s massive financial, military and logistic support and served as manifestation instruments of the policy of the so-called Resistance and Rejectionist Front against Israel and for the “Iranization” of the political geography in which the two for-

mations activate. Both Hamas and Hezbollah constituted, at the same time, the first labs where the Iranian regime and its Guard of the Revolution carried out the experiments of creating proxies in the future ideological and military wars of the theocratic regime, experiments which continued in Iraq after the invasion of this country by the American armies of the George W. Bush Administration by the consistent involvement of the Guard of the Revolution in setting up the so-called *Jaysh Al-Mahdi* (Mahdi-messiah’s Army), as military wing of the block led by the Shia leader Moqtada Al-Sadr, with the stated objective of fighting foreign occupation and the Iraqi Sunni rebellion, an army from which jihadist formations were to emerge and on which basis the Jihadist Salafist phenomenon evolved as did, later on, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. On the same background, *Kata’ib Hezbollah* militias (The Falanx of the Party of God) were set up with the same multifarious Iranian assistance and, in 2007, the militias *Asa’ib Ahl Al-Haqq* (The Family or The People loyal to the True God), as fighting troops against the foreign occupying coalition in Iraq.

The breaking off of the civil war in Syria in March 2013 meant a radical change of the Iranian government’s strategy, interested in keeping Bashar Al-Assad’s regime in power and, implicitly, of the Iranian presence and control in Syria, and focussed decisively not only on a direct military involvement on the Syrian front through the Guard of the Revolution and the *Bassij* volunteers formations, but also through setting up Islamic mercenary militias made up not only of Iranian fighters but of other Muslim states (with Shia majorities) of different regions of the Asian continent as well. Alongside the military bases, logistic arrangements (arms and ammunition etc. deposits) and ground air defenses set up by the Iranian side, this mosaic of sectarian militias had as main role on the front supporting Bashar Al-Assad’s regime and, at the same time, of establishing bridgeheads necessary for setting up a “Shia arch” or “Shia crescent”, including territorially in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

In the context of the continuation, after the Russian Federation’s military intervention in

Syria, at the end of September 2015, of the peace initiatives (in Geneva, under the United Nations' auspices) or the initiation of such initiatives in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana by Russia, Turkey and Iran, in Djeddah, Saudi Arabia and in Sochi, in the Russian Federation, the peace demarches naturally raised issues concerning Syria's political, constitutional and functional future after the end of civil war. One of the essential issues on the negotiation agenda was the sovereignty and unity of the country and, one of the conditions for reaching this purpose is the future statute of the foreign presence on the Syrian territory, namely dissolving, reorganising or evacuating the foreign militias and, on this background, Iran hardened its approaches hinting at never accepting to give up the services of the militias it created and supported materially, financially and commanded and, moreover, adopted a radicalized discourse signifying that far from exhausting their role, the formations it sponsors in Syria will be maintained for constituting a close assault core group in case of a confrontation with Israel. General Mohammed Ali Jaafari, the Commander of the Guard of the Islamic Revolution in Iran even declared that the militias he disposes of on the Syrian-Iraqi front could be unified in an "world army" organised in accordance with the model of Bassij volunteers troops with missions of "defending the Iranian Islamic revolution wherever is needed on the globe". So that it is quite possible that the issues connected to the presence and the future of the military offshoots of Tehran's regime will constitute a Gordian knot and a hotbed of tensions between Iran and the other regional and international players with negative consequences in what concern the resilience or shortening the Syrian war. The current article does not tackle this issue from political and diplomatic perspective, but only presents, with the exception of the Lebanese formation of Hezbollah, the "IDs" of the main pro-Iranian active militias acting on the fronts in Syria and Iraq.

II

The military and paramilitary formations in Syria and Iraq that the Iranian general Mohammed Ali Jaafari wants to be unified in an "international Bassij" and to receive direct orders from Tehran, yet which remaining in Syria is not wanted by any of the players involved in the crisis in this country and so much less by Israel, out of easily to understand reasons, are:

Liwa' Al - Fatimiyun (The Brigade of Fatimids)

After the official announcement of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's "caliphate" defeat, the Brigade of Fatimids' commanders and fighters addressed the supreme leader of the Iranian revolution and general Qassem Soleymani, the commander of "Al-Quds Brigade", a congratulation message which, among others, stressed that "although the criminal Islamic State Daish was defeated in Iraq and Syria, their leaders in Tel Aviv and Washington will continue to ignite the flames of violence and tragedies among the Shia and Sunni Islamic world. This is why we declare that after we have had cleared the entire Syria's territory of taf-kiris... we will be ready to assist all the world's oppressed under the command of our beloved imam Khamenei".

Having taken its name from Fatima, the youngest daughter of Prophet Muhammad (and, according to Shia theology, his only child), wife of the fourth of Muhammad's successor, Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, caliph between 656-661, and mother of Hassan and Hussein, worshiped in the Shia Muslim rite as holy martyrs, the "brigade" was established in 2014 from former Afghanis fighters against the Soviet occupation who were recruited, equipped, financed and trained by the Iranian Guard of the Islamic Revolution. According to Afghan and Iranian sources, the group has currently between 12,000 and 14,000 fighters after around 8,000 fighters of the brigade have been, according to the same sources, killed on the fronts of the Syrian civil war. The recruiting base was represented by the 3 million or so Afghanis who took refuge in Iran's mountaineous areas, most of them of Azeri origin, settled in Afghani-

stan's central region. If the majority members of this militia accepted to enroll in Iran's pay due to financial reasons or for securing the livelihood for them and their families, others, particularly the commanders, had ideological motivations or personal affinity with the Iranian government who secured them accommodation and education especially at the religious schools and establishments in Qom. Although the stated purpose of setting up the "Brigade of Fatimids" was protecting and defending the sanctuaries and holy places of the martyrs of Shia Muslim sect, they took an active part in the majority of the important fights unfolded in Syria against the political and military opposition and the jihadist and Salafist factions starting with the offensives in Syria's south and north, to the battles for Homs, Palmyra, Aleppo, Hama and the central areas of the Syrian desert. Syrian opposition forces accused several times the "brigade" of using lethal gas on the battlefronts. Lately, the "Fatimids" set up close connections with the Lebanese political and military formation Hezbollah and with the Iraqi Shia militias *Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abiy* (Popular Mobilisation), and echellons of the "brigade" were sent by the Iranian sponsor on the war front in Yemen for backing the Houthi rebels against the Saudi-led Arab coalition.

More recently, commanders of the "brigade" declared, with the acceptance of the leadership in Tehran, that "not only the fight against the jihadist terrorists is the main objective of the "Fatimids militias", but also the future battle against the Zionist enemy and for liberating the Syrian Golan" a fight that "must be carried out with guns in their hands by all the Arab and Muslim armies in the world".

***Liwa' Al-Zeynabiyun* (The Zeinabite Division)**

The mausoleum sheltering the earthly remains of Zeinab, the daughter of Ali and Fatime who was genealogically direct granddaughter of prophet Muhammad having, in the Shia eschatology, a prominent place on the list of Shia worshiped martyrs and especially of the Iranian

twelvers lies in the southern suburb of Damascus. Zeinab is worshiped by Sunni Muslim sect, too, and a second (Sunni) mausoleum dedicated to her is in the Egyptian capital Cairo. Taking its name from this very prominent figure of the Muslim religious history, "The Division of those believing in Zeinab", offered as justification of its own establishment and mission defending and preserving the sacred places and the affective memory of this emblematic figure of the Islamic belief.

What is different with this militia it is its ethnical composition as it is made up, even from its inception, in 2014, of Pakistani fighters who were dominantly present on the fronts of the Syrian civil war ever since its breaking out in 2011. Initially, its hard core of fighters came from the Afghan brigade "Al-Fatimiyun", who were at the time in Syria either as individual mercenaries or as an entity financed, equipped and under the command of the Iranian theocratic regime. After the "Fatimids" numbers increased, overtaking the human potential of a division, the Pakistani hard core, whose numbers increased as well, was separated and a different division was set up and which, as was the case with the rest of similar entities, are under the command of the Guard of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. An important part of these troops is made up of Pakistanis residing in Iran as well as of the Pashtun (Shia) ethnic majority of Pakistan acting as mercenaries paid for from the budget of the Guard of the Revolution with monthly payments of up to \$1,200. After its establishment, the new "division" had its location south of Damascus in the surroundings of Zeinab mausoleum and mosque and, as of 2015, the fighters of this echelon were actively engaged in many offensive operations carried out in Damascus area, Deraa, south of the country, the campaign of reconquering Aleppo from the political and military Syrian opposition, Hama, Deir Ezzor, on the Euphrates banks, Palmyra, in Syria's central desert, etc. The division's or other observatory and analyses institutes' communiqués estimate that the human losses of this entity between 2014 and 2016 were of 70 fighters.

Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haqq (The Groupings of the True God People)

A military Shia structure set up in 2006 and based on the ideology and dogma of the Iranian Shiism, known also as "Khazali Grouping" after the name of its founder, Qais Al-Khazali, the entity was separated from the former "Mahdi-messiah Army" led by Muqtada Al-Sadr and had a durable involvement, terrorism included, both in the conflict that set Iraq ablaze after the 2003 American invasion (more than 6,000 attacks against the coalition and the American occupation troops are attributed to the grouping) and in the Syrian civil war against Islamic State, Djabhat Al-Nussra group (the Syrian offshoot of Al-Qaida) and the Free Syrian Army. Under the name of "*Al-Sadiqun*" (The loyal ones), it has run, even in violent forms (bomb attacks, threats etc.) in the 2014 Iraqi parliamentary elections and succeeded in securing a mandate only out of the 328 seats of the legislative in Baghdad.

In 2007, its human potential was estimated at 7,000 members (government official sources indicated less than 1,000 fighters). It is appraised that the grouping receives from Iran a monthly financial assistance of \$750,000 in cash and \$3m in arms and ammunition. In April 2015, the grouping claimed responsibility for killing Izzat Ibrahim Al-Duri, Field Marshal and party and state deputy of the former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein.

Upon Tehran's orders, the "groupings" dislodged part of their troops in Syria where they fought on the fronts of the civil war under the name of "Heydar Al-Karar Brigades", and were active especially in the offensive for Aleppo and in the confrontations that took place in Damascus region and the rural areas surrounding it.

Harakat Hezbollah - Al-Nujabā'

(The Movement of the Nobles - Party of God)

It is a paramilitary Shia religious group that separated in 2013 from the "Groupings of the

True God People", financed and armed by Iran, towards which it manifested ideological and doctrinary obedience. Its name came from a Shia legend according to which Zeinab, daughter of caliph Ali Ibn Abi Talib, jailed by the Omayyad authorities during the battle of Karbala, between the Arabs and the Persians, uttered in front of the tribunal she was brought before the following: "It is wonderful and great that the nobles of the party of God suffer martyrdom by the hands of the cowardly servants of the party of Satan".

The movement was one of the main participants, alongside the troops of the Syrian loyalist army, to the offensive for conquering Aleppo in 2015. Ideologically, the formation shares the principles of "velayet e-faqih", of total submission to the supreme guide of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Khamenei, and from organisational point of view its troops are divided in four brigades, one of them called "Golan Brigade".

Liwa Abu Al-Fadel Al-Abbas (Abu Fadel Al-Abbas Brigade)

It was set up in 2012 by the Iranian Guard of the Islamic Revolution and is made up of Iraqi Shia Muslims who took refuge in Syria, of Syrian Shiites from the Damascus region as well as of other fighters coming from Asian countries with Shia population. Hierarchically, it is led by an Iraqi general subordinated to the Iranian general Qassem Soleymani, commander of Al-Qods brigades of the Revolutionary Guard. The brigade, made up of four fighting units, co-operates on partnership bases with a series of other smaller Shia fighting entities although each of the latter is called brigade (The Martyrs Brigade, The Imam Hussein Brigade, The Soldiers of God Brigade, The Ammar Bin Yasser Brigade etc.).

III. The Shia sect and the Syrian civil war

The privileged relationship between the Baathist Alawite regime in Syria and the twelver¹ regime date back to 1980s, during the

1. Confesiune musulmană şiiită care cunoaşte, ca şi sunnismul, de altfel, mai multe secte şi şcoli de jurisprudenţă islamică, trei dintre acestea fiind cele mai cunoscute: *duodecimani*, adepţi ai credinţei în existenţa a 12 "imami" ascunşi, lideri ai comunităţii

Iraq-Iran war when Syria was ruled by Hafez Al-Assad. The historical hostility between the Syrian and Iraqi Baathists determined Hafez Al-Assad's lining-up alongside the new Iranian theocratic regime set up after the 1979 Islamic revolution and formed the so-called "Resistance and Rejectionist Front" (against Israel and Israeli occupation of Arab territories). The present Syrian leader, Bashar Al-Assad, has continued and amplified the pro-Iranian policy promoted by his father that materialized, among others, in the Damascus regime's supporting the Lebanese political and military formation Hezbollah that was created, armed, equipped and financed by the Islamic government in Tehran by means of the Guard of Islamic Revolution (Pasdaran).

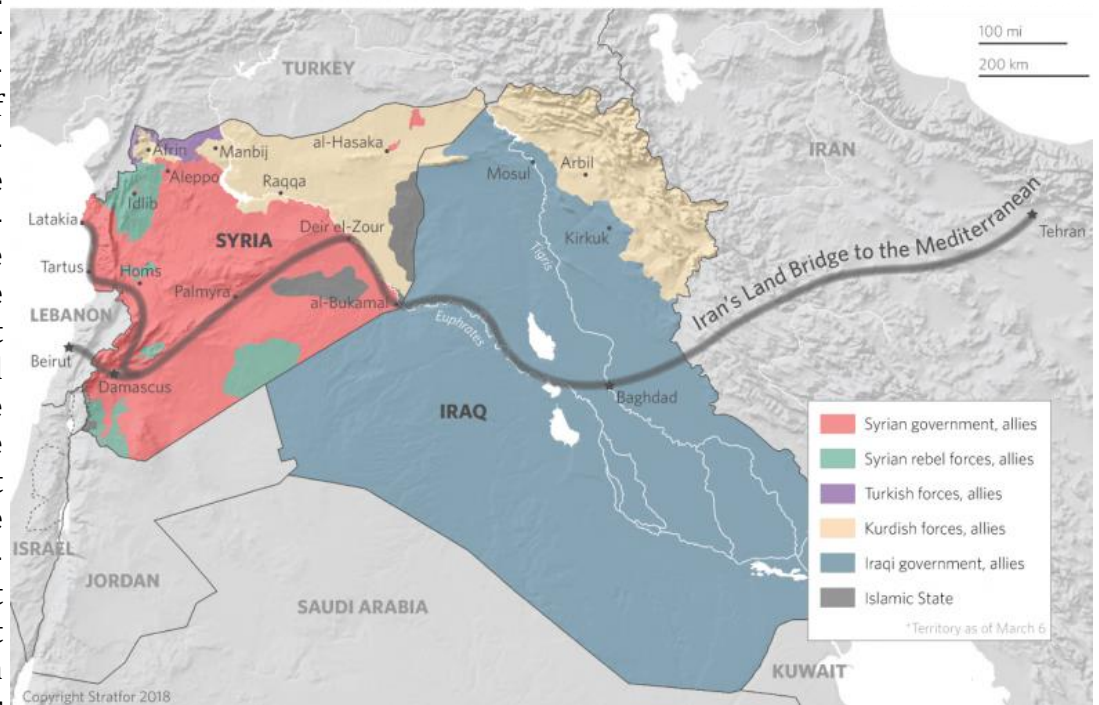
The 2011 civil war in Syria and the request addressed by the authorities in Damascus for military assistance was just the beginning of a long period in which Iran, in accordance with its doctrine concerning the "export of revolution" and regional expansion, met that request. The massive inflow of Shia human potential, of financial and military assistance amounting to billions of dollar, the infiltration of the Persian element into the social and economic texture of the Syrian state and, last but not the least, the broad Iranian military involvement on the Syrian front either with its own military forces or

mostly with a mosaic of Iranian and multinational Shia militias financed by Tehran lent the civil war in Syria a strong sectarian character which contributed substantially to turning the front in Syria into a stage controlled by the Shia sect.

The dissemination of the Iranian Shia ideology in Syria became a continuous and systematic process once the Syrian civil war broke out which materialised as well in an offensive infiltration of the quasi-totality of state institutions, of the economy, of the demographic configuration (by displacing entire sectarian communities and their replacement with followers of Shiism or even by settling Iranian Shiites. So, discussing a possible "liberation" of post-conflictual Syria from foreign presence - Iranian in this case, will have no serious chance of completion having in mind that a real "exit" of the Iranians would suppose the expulsion of massive colonies of Iranians transplanted in the Syrian socie-

Iran's Land Bridge and Proxy Theaters

In addition to its territorial and military strength in the Levant, Iran projects significant political influence. General elections will take place in Iraq and Lebanon this quarter. Iran will support its allies in both places against challengers backed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey.



musulmane, ultimul dintre aceștia, urmând, potrivit tradiției, se reîncorporeze ca "Mahdi" –Messia și să coboare pe pământ pentru a salva lumea de la pieire și a instaura domnia universală a credinței islamice; *septimani*, care recunoasc existența a numai 7 imami; *ismaeliții*, sectă de descendență duodecimană dar practicând o variantă heterodoxă a šiismului, în care se întrepătrund elemente alogene preluate din creștinism, zoroastrism și practici hinduiste; *Zeidi ii*, practicanți ai unei mixturi sectare šiită care oscilează între duodecimani și septimani. Duodecimani sunt preponderenți în Iran în care această sectă este, astăzi, religia oficială a Republicii Islamice a Iranului.

ty, many of them possessing now Syrian identity papers and citizenship issued by the ruling Syrian regime. The issue is much more difficult to solve in case of the fighting units financed and controlled by Tehran in the framework of the Syrian conflict. These paramilitary formations are backed by another key-element, namely the military bases Iran implanted in the geography of the Syrian national territory. Whether some of these are run within the Syrian military infrastructure, some others, not a few ones, are independent entities and are exclusively administered by the regime in Tehran such as those in Deir Ezzor, Aleppo, Al-Qusseir, close to the border with Lebanon, in the touristic towns of Zabadani and Bloudan, some 35 km west of Damascus and in other districts.

The sectarian transformation and Syria's Iranian type militarization will represent, in all likelihood, factors that were not tackled in any of the stages of the political and diplomatic proces of pacifying Syria and that will constitute not only hurdles difficult to overcome on the way to normality but also potential threats to security and peace in the regional neighbourhood.

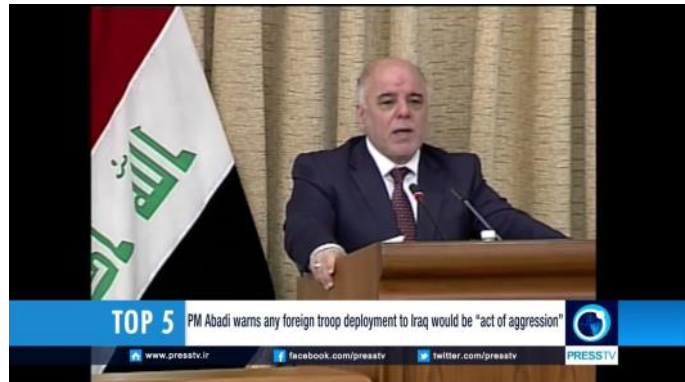
IN THE POST-DA'ISH IRAQ, ELECTIONS ARE COMING.

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS?

Reza SHAHRESTANI

On December 9th, 2017, the Iraqi prime minister, Heydar Abbadi, proclaimed the victory of the government army and of its allies over the jihadist-terrorist group Islamic State at the end of a three-year war during which the "Islamic neo-caliphate" of imam Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi represented not only a blood tainted and brutal tragedy but also a permanent threat to the national Iraqi identity and to the very territorial unity and existence of the Iraqi state itself.

With the declarative end of the Salafist-terrorist entity, a new double front was opening for Iraq, no less problematic and provocative: managing the post-Da'ish period with the remanence on the national territory of serious terror-



ist-Islamist residues, on the one hand, and approaching the path to coming back to normality and to democracy values and identitarian reconstruction, on the other hand. And a first concrete step towards this direction will be taken in May 2018, when general elections, conceived as a reference staging point for the Iraqi state's and society's resuming the course to sovereignty, justice and development are scheduled.

The May poll will take place when the domestic stage and the regional environment of the country between the Euphrates and Tigris has no shortage of difficulties and uncertainties that might constitute serious discouraging obstacles and barriers as far as the chances that the future elections bring to the Iraqis the fulfilment of the bets made with their own future.

It is particularly about the question whether the war against the Islamic terrorist cancer is really over. If the results achieved until Heydar Abbadi's victorious announcement marked an important positive turning point in the fight against the internal and regional jihadism, the multi-state international coalition instead did not reach all the objectives assumed. For, to the extent it lost the entire geography under its control during three years, the radical group Islamic State is going over a process of turning into a **clandestine organisation** tacitly oriented towards resuming, for tactical reasons, the use of means and techniques specific to classical terrorism and the available security data confirm the fact that the jihadists have the logistic under way of being mended and extended including shelters and clandestine regrouping bases, arms and ammunition stores and, no less important, a consistent potential of human elements devoted

and decided to further bear the black flag inherited from "caliph" Al-Baghdadi. Taking under effective and efficient control the great desert and the tribal areas where the jihadism is mounting its main "bridgeheads" will not be an easy task for the government in Baghdad which is striving in its turn to consolidate its power in a strongly divided country between Arabs and Kurds, between Shia and Sunni and between politically fluctuating forces dedicated rather to their own partisan interests than to the national unity, cohesion and prosperity.

At the same time, the "Da'ish" group's doctrine and ideological concepts still remain a seducing horizon for the Sunni population in the Arab regions, especially in the old fiefdoms of Fallujah, Ramadi and Tikrit – and also among the social, ethnic and sectarian segments that were permanently marginalised and subject to injustice and most diverse vexations by both the government in Baghdad institutions and by the Kurdish and Shia circles in the country.

On the other hand, the main entities that contributed to the victory over the jihadist phenomenon, namely the Iraqi army and the fighters of the Shia "*Al-Hashd Al-Shaabiy*" (Popular Mobilisation) militias, feel entitled to claim the statute of vanquisher over "Islamic State" and, consequently, of players entitled to sharing the power and benefits devolving from it. Under such circumstances, the government in Baghdad is confronted with the not at all easy task of finding a *modus vivendi* between the government's programs and the claims of the over 140,000 belligerents who fought in the "Popular Mobilisation" and who, in the extreme moments of war saved, not only once, the national army from dissaray if not from collapse and scored, according to the commanders of this structure, losses of around 8,000 dead and 14,000 wounded. These "bravado" acts are nevertheless shadowed by numerous – popular or official - accusations that the "mobilisation" perpetrated multiple hostile, brutal and vindictive acts against the Sunni Muslim community as well as the fully obedient relations towards Iran's interests and policies, facts that determined the United States to list the formation's leader as terrorist involved in the 1983

attack against the French and American embassies in Beirut. In a forward-looking approach of the elections, "Popular Mobilisation" alongside other Shia paramilitary formations under the Iranian umbrella such as "Badr Battalion" and the "League of the Virtuous Ones" (*Hay'at Al-Nujaba'*) announced its decision to participate in the parliamentary elections "irrespective of the support it enjoys or not among the Iraqi electorate". The leaders of "Popular Mobilisation" at least announced their availability of turning the movement into an independent entity, in accordance with the Iranian model of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. For the time being, the Iraqi prime minister announced officially on March 8th the decision of its government of integrating the fighters of this movement into the national police and security forces, something that does not diminish at all the capacity of "Mobilisation" of influencing the choices of the voters at the next poll.

The vindictive fractures of the Iraqi society and electorate are not imputable only to the Sunnis in their conflict with the Shiites as they engaged other sectarian groups who, in a way or another, were the victims of Shiites' ill treatments and, as a response, of the Sunnis when that was possible. The May elections will unfold in a moment of settling the accounts between those who either suffered or those who had pleasing benefits as a result of the war or those who aspire to such benefits by means of the electoral game at the polls. Whether during Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi "caliphate" the Zaidis, a Shia sect, were subject to a difficult to imagine wide range of brutality by the assassins of "Islamic State", now the needles of the Iraqi watch seems to move anti-clock wise. Ever since the summer of 2017, *Human Rights Watch* reported the rapes, tortures and collective executions staged by the Zaidi community around Mosul city.

In general, the Sunni-Shia adversity in Iraq is evolving in a climate in which the Sunnis are de facto marginalised and kept away from the political games.

If, in the context of the regional developments, Iraq and its post-Saddam Hussein governments

became a turntable used intensely by Iran for promoting its national and sectarian interests at the level of the Arab Middle East, prime minister Heydar Abbadi is, from the perspective of the soon to come elections, in front of a double challenge and, on the way it will be tackled depends to a great extent his and his Shia Islamist Al-Da'wa formation electoral chances. On the one hand, it is about "correcting" the image of an appendix to Tehran's policy and of promoter of Shia hegemony to the detriment of the other ethnic and sectarian segments of the Iraqi society. A much more difficult mission, as this negative image is deeply embedded in the collective mind memory since the preceding governance of the former prime minister Nouri Al-Maliki who, in his turn, belonged to the same Shia Islamist Party Al-Da'wa. Second, it is about the "contest for Iraq" waged between the Sunni Wahabbite monarchy of Saudi Arabia and the Shia theocratic regime in Tehran, each of the

two regional powers to maintain its sphere of influence (in Iran's case) and to "extract" Iraq from the Iran's "strap" and moving Baghdad into the Saudi camp – something strongly supported by Donald Trump's Administration.

The stakes of the future general elections are decisive for Iraq's near future. As, besides the security and economic and social normalizing challenges, Iraq is overwhelmed by the devastating scourge of corruption that ranks the country (according to a *Transparency International* report) among the ten most corrupt countries in the world. This is the reason why prime minister Heydar Abbadi declared that, for Iraq, fighting corruption is and should be a natural extension of the military operations against the terrorist phenomenon. The entire society must take part in the battle for uprooting corruption, Heydar Abbadi added.

The answer of the Iraqi society, exhausted by so many battles it had to go through, will be given through the polls.

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION - THE NEW PEACEMAKER BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS?

Munir SALAMEH, Ramallah

Since 1991 launching of the so-called "Madrid Process" of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and until signing, in September 1993, of the "Oslo Agreements", the thorny path towards peace and coexistence between the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs was dominated, drawn and smoothed by the United States of America – as engine of the process and its exclusive mediator. A quality that seems to have been exhausted after almost 30 years, when the Palestinian National Authority decided to not recognize any longer Washington as credible mediator and peacemaker after the president Donald Trump signed, on December 6th, 2017, the decision of America's recognizing Jerusalem as the eternal and legitimate capital of the Jewish state and to move to the "holy city" the American Embassy in Israel.



Ever since the launching of the Palestinian-Israeli secret and public negotiations, the American side has worked actively and succeeded in marginalising and excluding the former Soviet Union and then the Russian Federation from any significant role in the contacts between the two belligerents. In response, Moscow assumed its own role, played on another stage – that of criticising and opposing the Israeli policy backed by Washington, in particular in what concern building new Jewish settlements in the Palestinian autonomous territories. The great losers of these never ending responses and responses to responses were the Palestinians and the process itself of finding a lasting solution to the Palestinian “issue”.

However, during the three decades that elapsed and in spite of the hurdles, contradictions and lacunas that existed, the Palestinian side juridically represented by the Palestinian National Authority and its president, Mahmud Abbas, never ceased to count on a possible Russian role (in parallel or in coordination with the European Union) to unlock, resume and continue the dialogue even if, in their majority, such bets did not materialize due to various reasons pertaining to either the dynamics of the Russian diplomacy and its inability to offer acceptable and viable alternatives, or pertaining to the negotiation strategy and tactics adopted by the Palestinian side or, in the end, to the lack of concordance between the Israeli (and American) approaches, on the one hand, and the Palestinian (and Arab) approaches, on the other hand. The deep transformations witnessed by both the Arab world, shaken by the roller of the so-called “Arab spring”, and by the international community, for whom the revival of the terrorist fundamentalism and the multinational coalition against it meant a radical change of the foreign affairs priorities, where the Palestinian issue was persistently overshadowed, both at the Arab world level and at the global community level. Last, but not the least, the dra-



matic situation witnessed by the Palestinian political body since 2006 when, following the general elections, the Palestinian society, the political elites and the national cohesion were fractured by the violent “divorce” between the two main Palestinian organisations – Fatah, in the West Bank, and the Islamist movement Hamas in Gaza, which instituted de facto the emergence of two Palestinian entities called by the commentators Fatahland and Hamasland, respectively, which rejected, to an equal extent, the numerous attempts, Arab ones included, of reconciliation among the factors with negative effect on the negotiation process. The political paralysis the Palestinian legislative and executive institutions are in, was added to the arguments invoked by the Israeli side that no negotiation is possible as long as the Palestinian side is not there as a coherent and credible counterpart.

On the background of this state of “clinical death” of the dialogue, the abovementioned decisions of Trump Administration on Jerusalem were made and the Palestinian National Authority decided, in its turn, not to recognize and accept the United State’s role of mediator and engine for unlocking and carrying out the negotiations with the Israeli state. In other words, the leadership in Ramallah decided to not participate in any form to contacts or negotiations that might be construed as being carried out under American auspices.

Under these circumstances, whereby the Palestinians see in their decision a “spearhead” meant to unweave the American individualism and exclusivism, the first substantial reaction of the Russian Federation came, namely a series of encouraging signals concerning Moscow’s readiness to enliven the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, and the last signal was the announcement made by the head of the Russian diplomacy, Serghei Lavrov, during the Valdai Discussions Club on February 19th, 2018. On that occasion, Serghei Lavrov declared in his intervention that

his country “is ready to host Palestinian-Israeli negotiations without preconditions”. He recalled that Russia worked permanently in the collective framework of the Four-Party International Committee (the “Cvartet” made up of Russia, USA, UN and the European Union) and considered that no state working individually is able to lead the negotiations towards the desired finality.

In his turn, president Mahmud Abbas presented his new vision of the format of carrying out the negotiations on the occasion of the extraordinary meeting of the Security Council on February 20th, 2018. In the speech he delivered on that occasion, the Palestinian leader spoke in favour of convening, by the middle of this year, an international conference for peace which is to agree, among others, upon a pluriparty international group to assist and support the belligerent sides in achieving a global solution to all issues connected to the final and permanent structure of the peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

In a way, the Russian Federation is familiar with Mahmud Abbas’ approach at least to the extent he suggested that such a peace conference or a preparatory meeting takes place in Moscow in accordance with resolution 1850 of the Security Council, having in mind the Russian Federation’s statute of permanent member of the Security Council and member of the International Cvartet for the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

The readiness expressed by Serghei Lavrov was confirmed in a joint communique of the Russian and Israeli ministries of Foreign Affairs after the meeting of the deputy minister Mihail Bogdanov had on February 20th with a deputy general director in the Israeli Foreign ministry. The official and joint confirmation of what Serghei Lavrov said at the meeting of Valdai Club means that the Russian Federation is ready to take into consideration the remarks and ob-

servations Israel might formulate in what concern Russia’s individual involvement. An that would mean, in its turn, that the specific level of achievements in such a formula would be inevitably under the maximum obtained by the Palestinians in case of Oslo Agreements. It is a reality that does not match Mahmud Abbas’ vision and expectations from a possible future Russia’s role as replacement of the United States in the posture of mediator.

For the time being, it is doubtful that the replacement of Donald Trump’s American team with Vladimir Putin’s and Serghei Lavrov’s team of diplomats will bring more added values than those offered by the Americans. First, for Mahmud Abbas’ abrupt “divorce” from the “American connection” was rather a vendetta reaction to Trump’s resolution concerning Jerusalem than a consequence of arguments pertaining to the negotiations mechanism. Second, for



Russia hasn’t offered so far and will not be able to offer a reforming vision and an original conception of what should mean the lasting peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Third, for the relations between Vladimir Putin and Benjamin Netanyahu are less cordial than the bonds between the Trump Administration

and the Israeli prime minister. And such a cordiality – even justified by interests - will last as long as the war in Syria continues and as long as the future of the relationship between the Russian Federation and Iran remains uncertain.

Supposing that Russia is ready to assume a difficult role, including the activation of the Cvartet’s “road map”, a successful outcome of its role will be uncertain until the Palestinian leadership itself will not fundamentally revise both its hard assets and the weaknesses eroding itself. Lacking a Palestinians’ convincing, credible and united position, Vladimir Putin will not be able to achieve more than the so far American administrations did.



**Ambassador prof. Dumitru
CHICAN**

Some decades before the Arab world of the Middle East and, by extension, the international community, got acquainted with the rapid explosion and the rise of the war against the Salafist-jihadist revival, the Arab-Islamic community became the stage of another sort of religious conflict which, although started in the early medieval period of Islam, turned during modern times and, more exactly, after the triumph of the Iranian Islamic revolution animated and led, in 1979, by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni, into a defining coordinate for the evolution of the Middle East up to our days. It is about the political and religious conflict between the majority Suni Muslim community and the minority Shia one in the overall share of the Islamic demography. Simplified and corseted in syntagms that already entered the lexical baggage of the contemporary political, political science and sociological discourse such as “Shiite crescent”, “Shiite arch”, “Shiite corridor”, “Shiite camp” as being in adversely relations with the “Sunni camp”, the conflict was more frequently and insistently presented, up to the assimilation, with the “Iranian connexion”, a manner of addressing and research that ignores a millenium and a half of Islam history and grants exclusivity to the role the Iranian theocratic regime, its ideology and political doctrine have in creating and maintaining the fault line separating the “Islamic nation” –*umma*.

With the territorial and military collapse of the extremist-jihadist group “Islamic State” – of Suni ideological and doctrinary origin – and the advance of the civil war in Syria towards a triumph of the Baathist regime in Damascus, an Iran’s ally, the idea of a final victory of the Iranian Shiism in its confrontation with the Suni sect is more and more insistently brought forward, a victory animated by revolutionary spirit

FROM THE “SHIITE ARCH” TO THE “SHIITE CRESCENT” GOING THROUGH THE “SHIITE CORRIDOR”

and Iran’s expansionist ambitions based on the Khomeynist theory of the “export of (Shiite) revolution”. But, the approach and the understanding of these dimensions of the competition unfolding within Islam implies a more earnest analysis of the nuances and details that, most often, are exiled by the researchers to the foot-notes space.

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There is a reality that cannot be either ignored or denied, namely that in the first decade of this century, marked by the fall of Taliban’s government in Afghanistan and the removal from power of Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime until the conclusion, in 2015, of the nuclear agreement between Tehran and the Western community, Iran promoted an intense policy of regional ascension materialized, among others, by the expansion of its influence in Iraq and Lebanon and its involvement as major player in the unfolding of the Syrian civil war or in the wars by proxies with its historical Saudi enemy in the Yemeni south of the Arabic Paninsula. The argument offered by the Shiite sectarian identity is, in Tehrans rhetorics, a supporting pillar of the theocratic regime’s regional expansionist ambitions. With a population of more than 90% belonging to the Shia sect, Iran is placing itself as first and sole representative of a minority religious sect at the level of the Middle East and the Arabian-Persian Gulf. Yet, the identitarian sectarian argument is not sufficient in itself for understanding Iran’s expansionist orientations. Reading the way the Iranian rulers define their own foreign policy is beneficial in this regard.

Since the death of Ayatollah Khomeiny, in 1989, the “revolutionary” current moved on the back-stage in favor of the “pragmatic” current in what concern drawing up domestic and foreign policies, the Islamic Republic implemented another conceptual change by placing the principle regarding the interest of the regime (*maslahat – e – nezam*) at the basis of the state, followed after

that only by the principles concerning the religious factor. And the new priority principle was devised around a syncretism combining political, sectarian and historical factors in order to project the image of a “besieged nation”, constrained to pay major attention to the developments of the regional proximity and of the international climate. Thus, for the Iranian planners and decision-makers, the Iranian state has the duty of permanently identify and implement initiatives that have to turn the threats into opportunities or, at least, to diminish them to a bearable hazard. In fact, such initiatives are characterized by discovering and exploiting any breach opened by the other players or provoked to them by means of proxies placed always on the first line of confrontation. In the latter case, it is about non-state players trained, reared and educated by Iran in the “close proximity”. This tactics initiated in Lebanon in the 1980s by creating and developing the political and military formation Hezbollah, was resumed and is applied today in Syria and in Iraq. Nevertheless, the “Shiite weapon” is not the only one on the panoply of the tools created and used for achieving a “cordon sanitaire” (*harim - e-aminiyat*) where Tehran aims at transforming its near proximity. From the Iraqi kurds to the militias of Shiite mercenaries brought from the Asian states to the Palestinian Hamas and the political alliance with Bashar Al-Assad’s Syrian Alawi regime is but promoting diversity as a descriptive factor for the Iranian policies.

More than achieving a regional pan-Shiism, the Iranian’s regime ambition is of pushing the security threats as farther away as possible from its



frontiers. The unconditional support Iran grants to its ally in Damascus is a peremptory token of evidence of the Iranian policy of creating and maintaining allies in the proximity of its sphere of national and security interests. The same is true in case of the Iraqi Shiite militias “Popular Mobilization” (*Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi*), created and trained by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard.

Not the least, the functionality of Iran’s “neighbourhood security policy” depends to a great extent on the domestic political chessboard. And, after the belicose president Ahmadinejad managed the “performance” of making a first fracture within the regime, while his successor, Hassan Rohani exercises his mandate starting from the priority that must be granted to the unity and the coherence among different circles, seen as an essential precondition for diminishing and, as much as possible, eliminating the isolation status the Islamic Republic is in regionally and internationally. In the first week of March, the head of the French diplomacy, Jean-Yves Le Drian, paid to Tehran a visit devised in the offensive spirit of the “Gallic cockerel” and aimed at persuading the Iranian regime to renounce the “interferences in the internal affairs of the neighbouring states and to freeze the programmes in the field of producing offensive missiles with different ranges”. Inspired by president Emmanuel Macron’s ill-timed thinking, the visit was characterized as an “unpleasant failure”, in Paris as well, a fact confirmed by the declarations made later in tough terms by the “supreme guide” Ali Khamenei, who considered that the existing problems between Iran and its neighbours as well as Iran’s regional role pertain to the direct relationship among the states and can be solved by negotiations and need not the intervention, that nobody requested – of France or of any other extra-regional state. “Did the Westerners solve their own problems for interfering in problems they don’t have any connection to?” wondered the “supreme guide” in Tehran.

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It can be seen that the so-called “Shiite arch”, as well as the older syntagm “Shiite crescent”, or

the more recent concept of “Shiite corridor”, Iran wants to be achieved for having access to the warm waters of the Mediterranean are not, first of all, expressions of realities or cultural and religious approaches but, to a high degree, eminently political objectives. The multifarious assistance Iran is granting to the Syrian regime represents, before all, an act inspired by strategic calculations meant to avoid the fall of a loyal regime and its replacement by one or several Sunni currents close to the Wahhabite Saudi monarchy and, in general, by the Sunnism accredited as official religion by the Arab monarchies in the Gulf. In accordance with its own political and security doctrine, the Iranian regime strives to play in Syria the same score that secured it an indisputable presence and influence in the domestic political life of Lebanon. From this perspective, the “Shiite arch” envisaged by Iran may be looked at rather as a “Resistance arch” and the extension in the political geography of the older “Steadfastness and Confrontation Front” where Iran and Hafez Al-Assad’s and Bashar Al-Assad’s Syria alongside the Lebanese Hezbollah represented the supporting pillars. This way, Iran succeeded in creating an ample network of crony entities through which it achieved a paramilitary infrastructure as well, a control on the business and financial circles and a profound insertion in the social texture of the “close neighbourhood” it controls and influences.

Do all these allow the assertion that we are in front of an Iranian triumph in “its vital security space”? An answer to this question is premature and unsure. One should not forget the fact – with historical roots and traditions – that there are not a few local Shiite communities which fundamentally identify themselves by their own specificities and by the citizenship affiliation to the national states they are living in and to which they submit to before everything else. To an equal extent, one should have in mind that the spiritual authority of the Iranian “supreme guide” – either the late Khomeyni or the incumbent Ali Khamenei – is far from being recognized as absolute reference for the entire Shia community of the Islamic world. The very concepts of

“Islamic republic” and of *velayat -e- faqih* (absolute submission to the supreme guide) are contested even in Iran and Iraq by prominent clerics and leaders of certain Islamic jurisprudence schools. Thus, the “Shiite arch” is contested and influenced, in the sense of acceptance or rejection, by the specificities and behaviours of local Shia communities.

The above findings do not necessarily suggest that the evolution of Iran’s regional role and positionings have their importance fading out in what concern the field of research and of pragmatical measures taken in the political, economic and military fields. The developments on a medium and long term of the general situation in the Middle East and the Arabic-Persian Gulf area generate by themselves new and unpredictable equations whereby numerous internal, regional and global factors are intersecting and collide most of the time, creating obstacles to the very plans of the Islamic Republic which, in certain circumstances, could be seen as a giant with clay feet.

How will the national Shiite communities react in perspective in what concern the doctrinary programmes of the theocratic regime? What will be the reaction – sectarian this time – of Sunnism and of its institutional and state supporters headed by the Arab monarchies in the region? How will the regional and extraregional powers react, Israel first of all, in accord with the United States and Saudi Arabia against Tehran’s future moves on the “chessboard” of the conflictual complex the Middle East region is witnessing? The regional situation is tense and might degenerate into a conflict which amplitude and consequences are difficult to predict now. And what will be the “reaction to reactions” of the theocratic regime, prisoner between the regional adversity and its ambitions of rising to the status of main player in the regional political geography, and not only?

The “Shiite crescent” is a concept developed at around 1900 from the geopolitical syntagm of the “fertile crescent” coined by the American archaeologist James Henry Breasted for designating the fertile geographical area which included

Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, (future) Israel, Palestine, (future) Jordan, Egypt, Cyprus as well as the border areas between Turkey and Iran.

For Iran and for the other players – either Iranian friends or foes -, the crescent lost its mystical and religious symbolic and became, instead, a field of manifestation of the religious policy and of the political religion. A capricious astronomy that may produce at any time surprises of a nature to descend the players from cosmic spheres to the realities that threaten the entire humanity to an equal extent.

SYRIA : THE VIIIth YEAR

Maher NABOULSI, Damascus

On March 17th, Syria entered the eighth year of civil war. The entrance in the new year of destructions and bloodshed occurred on the "Damascus road", on the eastern side of the oasis that embraces and feeds this city continuously inhabited millennia after millennia ever since its inception. Today, on this Damascus road, on which dust the Apostle Paul and Saint Thomas left the prints of their sandals, tanks and battalions armed to the teeth are confronting and, sneaking among them, near the funnels of the craters bitten in the earth of Ghouta oasis (as Ghouta means oasis in old Arabic) ghostly processions of the unfortunates forced to seek, even in the cracks of the earth, a shelter against death coming from the skies and from the earth on behalf of a cynical democracy or of a no less hypocrite Islam.

These lines are written the very day the All Orthodox Russians Russian at the polls are enthroning Vladimir Putin again on the presidential chair and are celebrating a known in advance triumph unto the glory and greatness of Mother Russia. And, on the scorched earth of Gouta Damascene oasis, Suhoi jets decorate the triumph with multi-coloured carpets of bombs under which the groans of the wounded and the last breath of those ripped up by explosions are not any longer heard and do not impress anyone.

These lines are also written the days Her Excel-

lency Ms Nikky Haley, "America über alles's" envoy as ambassador at the rest of the world organisation, heralds *urbi et orbi* the intention of infallible Donald Trump of sending, once more, for bringing the "American peace", the cruise missiles launched from the world's seas on Damascus – threatened, too, to share Aleppo's fate – and to be turned into rubble and caves after having resisted the hordes of invaders coming from all the corners of the earth onto the glory of Zerubbabel, Zarathustra, Christ and Muhammad.

These lines are written, too, the days when, arm in arm with Marianne, the one with the Phrygian headgear having the Galic cockerel on her shoulder and gazing at the baguet of the conductor of the White House and at the ghosts generating nostalgias of the brave general Gouraud – the one who made Al-Sham – Greater Syria – disappear and at the grey-haired diplomat Georges François Picot – another player using the pencil on the map of the Middle East – threatens with another Waterloo against Damascus with sophisticated missiles, everything just for bringing peace to Syria, it goes without saying!

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Syria's entering its eighth year of calvary has had as background a landscape in which the confrontations, vainglories and regional and international contests for seizing what remained of this country or, in extremis, for preventing the other competing players from doing the same, reached a peak beyond which, naturally, there should not be any upside going ladder towards an oneiric apogee preceded by the prefixes "mega" or "hyper". And this entrenchment is the more disappointing and incomprehensible as it comes after an year's end where hope was that Syria came closer to the moment of passing from war to peace. A hope backed by a relaxation of the mutual manifested rigidity by the Russian Federation and America. Even if this de-escalation of the relations between the two main players on the Syrian stage was frail and temporary, one could have spoke of a peace process in



ing under control the developments on the front was essentially based on the bombardment jets which provoked disproportionate damages and destruction as compared with the tactical advantages gained. Under such circumstances, one may say that the decisive role in the future ground operations rests with Iran and, to a smaller extent, with Turkey.

Geneva, of an “Astana process”... Vladimir Putin declared, even if it was too early, that the “war in Syria has practically come to an end” and that Russia will proceed with withdrawing its war machine deployed in Syria as a first consistent step towards agreeing a political solution to the Syrian file. Yet, although reaching the final stage, the Syrian chessboard abruptly returned to the previous stage with the difference that the war, even the irrational one for the “liberation” of the eastern side of Gouta (which, at the date of this article, has passed in a proportion of 80% under the regime’s control) is not any longer an “internal war” between the loyalist army and opposition (the latter reduced to the Islamist radical formations led by Al-Qaida), but almost an exclusive confrontation among the regional and extra-regional players. So, one speaks not about a “Syrian” civil war, but of a regional and international conflict on a reduced (for the time being) scale. The prospect of a peace whereby the power could be shared by the opponents and the regime became already a meaningless and void of content syntagm. Russia failed lamentably – a reality proven especially after the “Sochi round” of the negotiations process – in its role of mediator it assumed in trying to offer or to impose a *modus vivendi* between the regime in Damascus and the political and military opposition. The so-called “de-escalation” zones proposed by Moscow in the framework of the “Astana process” were not really operational and moved to a history chapter, as the only still viable exception is the “non-conflict” enclave of south-west of Syria. On the other hand, the Russian strategy of keep-

Some Western analysts’ and decision makers’ bet on the emergence of some major fault lines in the cooperation and the alliance between Moscow and Iran is unrealistic at least for the foreseeable future. The critics of the relations between Vladimir Putin and the theocratic regime in Tehran ignore, deliberately or not, that the reasons backing this alliance between Slaves and Persians is not aimed at or generated by the Syrian conflict only, but outreaches such dimensions by the joint or intersecting interests the two states have regionally and on the background of the new cold war whereas Iran represents a valuable bargaining chip in the competition between the Kremlin and the White House. And the binding agent of these relations – in Syria – is so much more the one meant to last in spite of the belicose declarations of the bureaucrats in the White House and the Pentagon, as Bashar Al-Assad is of no interest any longer – as even the general Joseph Votel, Chief of Central Command, declared. For the American side, Bashar Al-Assad is necessary only to the extent he could be invoked as the author of “lethal gas attacks” which – documented or not – could offer the United States valuable evidence for being present in Syria under the pretext of “fighting Islamic State”. In general, the American strategy in Syria continues to be confused and based on a set of factors and objectives among which: 1. the continuation of the campaign against the remnants of “Islamic State”; 2. Uprooting theocratic Iran’s regional influence for which Syria represents an important starting point, while renouncing the Syrian front is seen in Washington

as pushing it for good on the Iranian balance pan, and 3. Maintaining a sine-die American presence in the eastern part of “serviceable Syria”, where the main agricultural, hydrological and energy resources are concentrated, with extensions to the Iraqi energy deposits.

Last year was characterized, in what Syrian front was concerned, by two other quite important and weighty factors, namely Turkey’s direct involvement in the war aimed at territorial reconfiguration justified by disposing of the threats the Kurdish minority in Syria poses to Turkish national security and, second, Israel’s giving up the posture of wait-and-see and moving to an offensive stance as a new player engaged in the internal developments of the Syrian front.

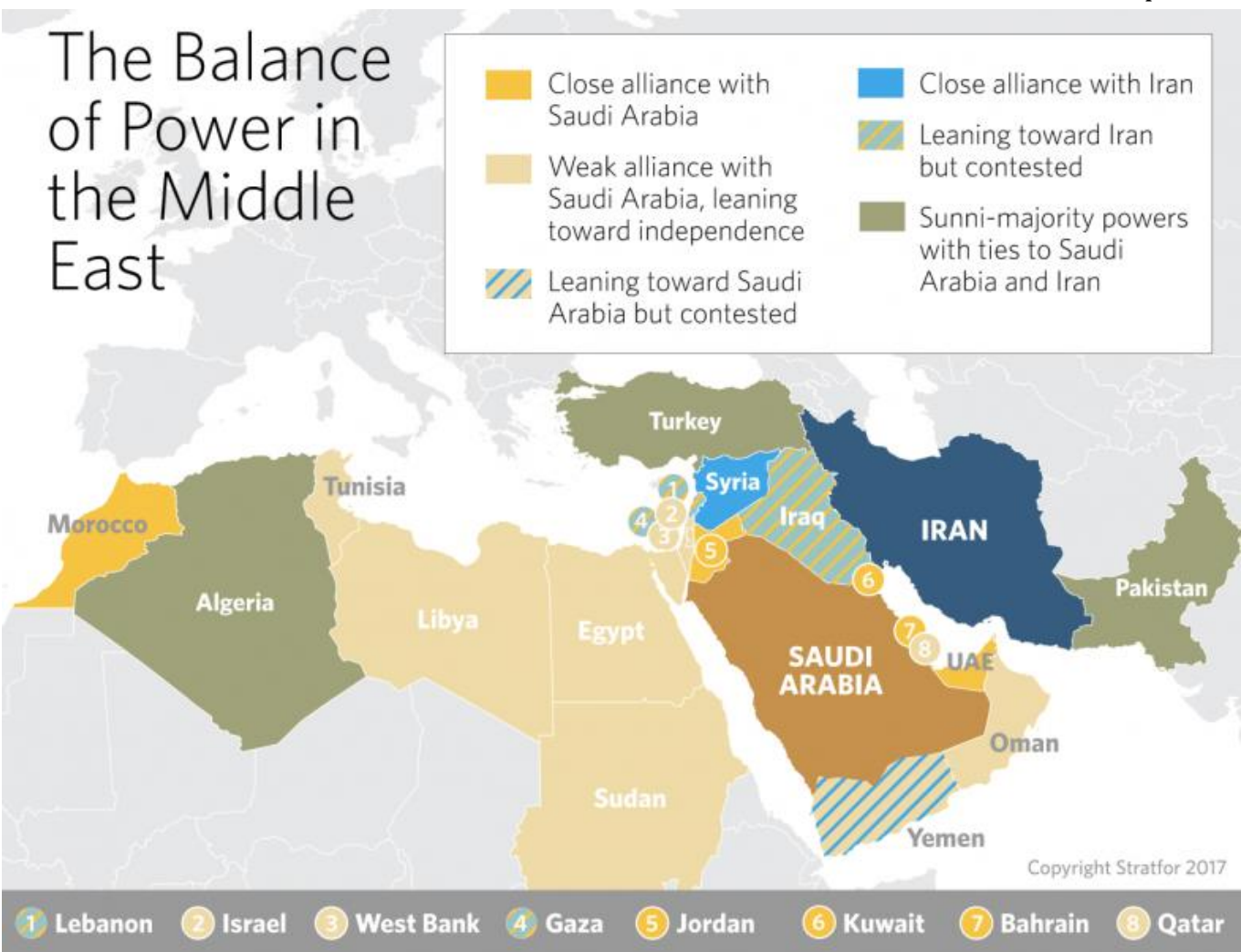
The multiplication of the regional and international players, as well as the bitter competition among them for securing their control and own

interests make less likely at least for the medium term a retrieval of Bashat Al-Assad’s regime control and sovereignty over the entire Syrian national territory as it was on March 17th 2011. So that the discourse on a reconfiguration of the future Syria’s political and geographical map remains topical.

THE SAME “DA’ISH” ...ANOTHER GEOGRAPHY

Dinu COSTESCU

After four years of blood tainted war against the jihadist-terrorist group self-entitled “Islamic State – Da’ish”, the international coalition led by the United States of America, in accord with the Iraqi government and the Syrian regime’s allies – the Russian Federation, Iran and Turkey – could proclaim, maybe with a premature enthusiasm, the demise of the fake “Islamic caliphate”.



The announcement of this victory came after the liberation of the important capitals and fiefdoms the terrorist organization has hold in Iraq and Syria in Mosul, Kirkuk, Fallujah, Ramadi, Rakka, Palmyra, Kobane and, in general, on great swathes of the national territories of the two mentioned Arab states.

It is obvious that the quasi-total loss of the geography and demography under the control of the criminal group led by "caliph" Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi meant their deprivation of the main strategic, material and economic resources, or with symbolic resonance as it meant as well locking the inflow corridors of the Arab-Muslim, western, Asians or African migrants candidates to the statute of "mujahedeen" and "martyrs onto the path of Allah" moving towards the "Da'ish" fronts and a significant decrease of the degree of hazard and terrorist threat to the international community and particularly to the Western Europe.

Nevertheless, the question concerning the extent the losses "Islamic State" incurred in terms of geographic space represent by themselves a strong enough argument for endorsing the assertion that the Salafist group Da'ish was not irreversibly destroyed yet. At least three elements may be called upon in this regard:

1. The totalitarian control "Da'ish" exerted during 3-4 years on populations of some millions of people allowed the short-lived "state" of imam Al-Baghdadi and his system to implement in the occupied areas a vast and deep-rooted network permitting the continuity of the urban and rural guerilla war within the surrounding communities;

2. Under the punctual circumstances the ostensible Islamic "state" emerged, evolved and acted, territorial loss does not necessarily mean a deconstruction and a dissolution of the doctrinary, ideological and "moral" fundamentals on which bases the emergence and the resilience of the Salafist jihadist phenomenon in the ultra-radical form of the "caliphate" in Levant were possible;

3. Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi organized his "state" in accordance with a territorial partition in emir-

ates and "vilayete" both in the spatial perimeter Iraq and Syria offered and at the regional and global level, seen from the projected perspective of the future world Muslim caliphate.

Along the lines of the Syrian-Iraqi matrix, an expansive and multi-directional development of the "Da'ish" presence took place by the creation of ad-hoc "franchises" through the affiliation to the ideology and programs of "Islamic State" of already existing Salafist-jihadist groups and entities, as doctrinary descendants of Al-Qaida network, or of other domestic Islamist-radical movements and currents in different countries of the world.

Presently, one may find that Da'ish "empire" covers the territory of two continents – Asia and Africa – where it is represented by more than 20 organisations and groups that declared, during 2014-2016, their affiliation to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's "caliphate" or endorsed the latter through either carrying out terrorist actions or through campaigns of proselytizing and dissemination of the radical-Islamist ideology or through other forms adapted to the geographical, demographical and social specificities of the environment they are acting in. The existence of these local subsidiaries allows the jihadist doctrine of "Islamic State" to renounce the theory launched by Ossama Bin Laden concerning "luring the ennemy on the Islam's land" (understood at the time as synonymous with the Arab Middle East) and its replacement with the offense conception according to which jihadism is, this time, the one which should be present in the "camp of apostates and crussaders" by means of the mosaic of the structures disseminated on the meridians of the continents. In fact, that was already demonstrated by the terrorist acts the said franchises carried out under the label of "Da'ish" in different parts of the world.

Under the circumstances and particularly when the salafist-jihadist movements in far away areas – Far East, South-East and Central Asia, the Arab Maghreb and Mashreq, Black Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea, the south of the Arabic Peninsula – are met with a reduced, sporadic

resistance from the failed local governments or state institutions, it is foreseen that “Da’ish” para-

FIGHTING ISIS* ACROSS THE GLOBE

Valdai Discussion Club

ISIS continued to exert an influence outside Syria and Iraq, through direct attacks organised by the group or its affiliates in other regions. Over 40,000 foreigners who flocked to join IS from more than 110 countries both before and after the declaration of the caliphate in June 2014

*ISIS (banned in Russia)

1 Wilayat Sinai
Egypt

- Formed on November 13, 2014

2 Afghanistan

- Formed in January 2015

3 Libya

- Recruits from Tunisia, Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal

4 East Asia Wilayat
Philippines, Indonesia

- Recruits from Arabian Peninsula as well as from elsewhere in South and South East Asia

5 Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

- Declared its support for IS in 2014
- IS-Khorasan will gain additional foreign members as it offers fighters from Central Asia and Western China a more attractive and convenient option

6 Turkistan Islamic Party

Founded by Uyghur jihadists in western China

- Promoting IS interests in Central Asia and China

7 Boko Haram
Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad

- Declared its support for IS in 2014

8 Greater Sahara (ISGS)
Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali

- Formed in 2013

9 Abnaa ul-Calipha
Somalia

- Emerged in 2015 when it broke away from al-Shabaab

10 ISSSKTU
Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

- A splinter group of al-Shabaab

July 2017

30% of the 5,000 residents of the EU thought to have gone to Syria and Iraq had returned home

10% of the 9,000 foreign fighters from Russia and former republics of the Soviet Union had returned

Sources: <http://thesoufancenter.org> <http://ctc.usma.edu/> <https://thediplomat.com/>

digm will continue to manifest itself and, implicitly, to offer a territorial, human and logistic base to a sufficient extent for supporting the assertion that “Da’ish” phenomenon is far from the extinction horizon.



The geographical partition of the main jihadist groups affiliated with “Islamic State”

Country, region	Group
1. Afghanistan	Between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters
2. Pakistan	<i>Harakat Al-Khilafa wa-l-Tawhid</i> (The Movement for Caliphate and Monotheism)
3. Indonezia	- <i>Jamaat Ansar Al-Tawhid</i> (The Group of Partisans of Monotheism) - Mujahidun Indonezia Timur
4. The Phillipines	- <i>Ansar Al-Khilafa</i> (The Caliphate Partisans) - The Muslim Mujahidins for Freedom
5. Uzbekistan	- Uzbekistan Islamic Movement - Islamic State Khorassan
6. Turkestan	Islamic Party (Uighur)
7. Tunisia	<i>Kataeb Al-Okba</i> (Al-Okba Brigades)
8. Algeria	Al-Murabitun Movement
9. Libya	<i>Majlis Shoura Shabab Al-Islam</i> (The Consultative Council of the Muslim Youth)
10. Egypt and Gaza	- <i>Jund Al-Khilafa</i> (The Caliphate Army) - <i>Ansar Beit Al-Maqdes</i> (Partisand of Jerusalem), Sinai - <i>Jaysh Al-Islam</i> (The Army of Islam), Gaza
11. Sudan	<i>Ansar Al-Tawhid</i> (The Partisans of Monotheism)
12. Mali	Islamic State in Great Sahara (ISGS)
13. Niger	ISGS
14. Nigeria	Boko Haram
15. Burkina Fasso	ISGS
17. Uganda	Islamic State- Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda (ISSKTU)
18. Camerun	ISSKTU
19. Somalia	- <i>Harakat Al-Shabab</i> (The Youth Movement) - <i>Abna’ Al-Khalifa</i> (The Caliph Children) - ISSKTU
20. Bangladesh	ISSKTU
21. Liban	<i>Ansar Dawla Al-Khilafa</i> (The Partisans of the Caliphate State)
22. Yemen	<i>Ansar Al-Dawla Al-Islamiya</i> (The Partisans of Islamic State)

ERDOGAN CARRIES THE "OLIVE BRANCH" FURTHER

Ambassador Professor Dumitru CHICAN

On 21 March, the foreign news headlines of the regional and international media outlets were reading: "Afrin has fallen!" The headlines announced that after two months of fierce confrontation between the Turkish army and the forces of the Kurdish minority in northern Syria, the strategic town Afrin located in the north-western part of the Syrian territory, defended by Kurdish militias, self-entitled "Democratic Kurdish Forces" (PYD) has fully gone under the control of the Turkish attackers - the news being received with ovations in major Turkish cities.

Initiated on 21 January 2018 under the name "Operation Olive Branch", the action was conceived as an extension of the first armed intervention of Recep Teyyp Erdogan's army - named "Operation Euphrates Shield" - included in the strategy that has been long before announced by the regime in Ankara to stop the expansion of the Kurdish minority west of the Euphrates and along the border between Turkey and Syria and, on a more extensive perspective, to block the possibility that a state entity would be created in this region - be it cantonal or in another form - of the Kurdish separatists, a perspective considered by Ankara to be an "existential threat" to its interests of security, sovereignty and national territorial unity.

According to the information provided by the Turkish military leaders and confirmed in governmental statements, in the two months of the "battle for Afrin", the human losses amounted to 1,500 Kurdish fighters and 400 deaths from the Free Syrian Army, an ally of Turkey, while the invading army registered only 46 victims. It is worth mentioning that the strategic city Afrin in the west of the "Syrian Kurdistan", along with the neighboring cities of Idlib, Manbij, Kobane, Jerabelus and Al-Bab on one side and the city of Qamishli, located at the east of the

area inhabited by the Kurds, represent the main strategic pillars for the area that the Kurdish militias want transformed into a "Rojava" - an independent Kurdish state - but whose realization is firmly rejected by Recep Erdogan's Turkey.

In terms of significance and the overall context of military developments on the Syrian war front, numerous observers and analysts have placed the offensive for Afrin and the conquest of this important referential point by the Turkish military along with the major campaigns in Aleppo - an important stronghold of the Syrian opposition recaptured after heavy fighting of the army loyalist to the regime in Damascus; al-Raqqah, the former "capital" of the "Islamic State" terrorist group or the fights in the eastern half of the Ghouta oasis, around the capital Damascus. The Turkish attackers' establishment of a bridgehead in Afrin allowed, in a perspective directly referred to by the Turkish President Recep Teyyp Erdogan, the continuation of "Operation Olive Branch" towards the Syrian-Iraqi border, after the attack and previous seizure of other localities. However, the perspective raises doubts and concerns and, to the extent that the Turkish advanced eastward, it would mean coming into direct contact with the approximately 2,000 American soldiers deployed in the area, which could result in an immediate open military conflict between the US



and Turkish forces.

There are some elements particularly analyzed and highlighted in terms of the strategic, tactical and symbolic dimension of the Kurdish lost enclave Afrin.

Firstly, after losing Kirkuk in Iraq and after the failure of last year's independence referendum, the defeat in Afrin represents a strong blow to the Kurdish project to create its own independent state entity. This episode proves once again that in the game of regional interests and balance of power and influence, the Kurds are, again - for the nth time - in the position of victims, for whom nationalist aspirations still remain a faraway objective. And the extreme situation of the Kurdish minority has narrowed their options a lot, either surrendering to the Turkish invaders, or continuing fighting without chances to win, or resorting to the undesirable alternative to ask for support from the Syrian regime, which, in the turmoil of its dependencies of the Russian and Iranian allies, avoided answering the call of the Kurds, which would have implicitly mean engaging the Syrian army in a war with the army of Recep Teyyp Erdogan. This was the last option in which Bashar Al-Assad would have been willing to send the army - already exhausted after the fight on several domestic fronts simultaneously. The refusal of fighting along with the Kurds would have meant for the Syrians the disintegration of the hope that through the intercession of Vladimir Putin, Turkey would finally recognize the legitimacy and continuity of the Baath regime. In fact, "the Kurdish danger", which, in principle, was considered a common enemy for Iran, Turkey, Iraq and Syria, is sufficient so that, under such circumstances, the four countries would leave aside the misunderstandings and differences between them and opt to sacrifice the weakest element in the regional equation - the Kurds.

Secondly, Afrin's "fall" means, in terms of tactics, the annihilation of the unification program of all the Kurdish regions in a cantonal unit that has been announced by the Kurds since 2014, which basically translates by the interruption of geographical continuity links between the re-

gions and "cantons" inhabited by the Syrian Kurds and thereby, the collapse of the project of opening a corridor linking the Syrian Kurdistan and the Mediterranean coast. And, looking ahead, a possible continuation by Turkey of "Operation Olive Branch" to the Syrian-Iraqi border will inevitably lead to blocking the geographical and relational links with the co-ethnics in the Iraqi Kurdistan.

Thirdly, in all likelihood, the Afrin episode will be followed by the opening of the "Manbij file" - another strategic city both for the Kurds and for the offensive intentions of Recep Teyyp Erdogan. In the situation of the next stage, the "liberation" and "securitization" of the strategic cities Manbij, Kobane (Ain Al-Arab) Jerabulus Al-Bab - the last barriers in front of the Turkish advance to al-Raqqah and from here, further to the border with Iraq, on the direction of the al-Raqqah-Qamishli alignment, Ankara is expected to intensify its efforts and pressures on Washington to make it accept and even support the departure of the Kurdish minority from Manbij and from the other neighboring settlements. It is known that Manbij - a city with a long and bloody history of battles among almost all belligerent parties on the Syrian front, fighting to obtain the supremacy of this settlement is - in a demographic perspective - the largest settlement of ethnic Kurds and, at the same time, the connection point between the main Kurdish cities and rural areas situated in the area of Afrin and relatively close to Aleppo and Idlib cities. Considering all these conditions, Turkey's victory in Afrin represents only a first episode of a longer and equally violent series, in which the symbol of the "olive branch" remains a mere...symbol.

Considering that the victory of Afrin is "Turkey's victory over the Western allies", a Turkish presidential advisor addressed the "allies" warning that "Turkey cannot play with its own national security, which will be defended regardless of the sacrifices required... We have done so in Afrin, we will do it in Manbij and eastern Euphrates". In turn, during a ceremony in Ankara celebrating the victory, President Erdogan resumed these ideas, saying "our troops are now targeting Manbij, Kobane and other cit-

ies east of the Euphrates, along the Turkish border”.

Finally, we must not ignore the reality that, ultimately, all the conflicts in the “Syrian war” take place on Syrian territory and therefore it is difficult to operate a distinction and trenchant separation between the fronts of this war. And under these circumstances, the old axiom that everything has a price that must be paid becomes very much valid. In the case of Recep Teyyp Erdogan’s “olive branch”, the understanding of the axiom is not difficult at all. First, we might witness an exchange: “Afrin in exchange of Bashar Al-Assad liberty to settle “the fights in eastern Ghouta, after which the war effort of the Syrian army will change direction towards the Dera area, Golan and the south and south-west of coun-

try. Since Bashar Al-Assad has remained neutral in Erdogan’s campaign from Afrin, he will have to end his support for the opposition factions and militias that he has been subsidizing as well as in the capital area. This is an exchange that would be feasible with the support of Vladimir Putin, the “new” president of the Russian Federation.

In this context, it is expected that the Kurds would reconsider their approaches and strategies for the near future. And most likely, the action taken in this respect will be to strengthen and maintain positions and the potential to keep Manbij and the Al-Jazeera region at the border with Iraq and its district capital, Qamishli.

Therefore, Recep Erdogan’s “olive branch” will prove to be even further a false symbol of peace.

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TENSIONS BETWEEN THE U.S.A. AND CHINA

Dr. Adrian CONSTANTINESCU

2018 heralds a time whereas further liberalisation of world trade in goods and services is and will be seriously questioned. The negotiations carried out under the aegis of the World Trade Negotiation (WTO) based on Doha Ministerial Declaration¹, initiated more than 16 years ago, are in a stalemate indeed. It is, moreover, the final implicit conclusion of the 11th Ministerial Conference of WTO held last December in Buenos Aires, Argentine.

An essential guilt for the slowing down (if not for halting, in certain respects) of the process of wide liberalisation of the international trade exchanges is to be blamed on the USA where the Trump Administration acts in accordance with the vote-winning slogan *America First* and is willing ultimately to resort to protectionist instruments in order to preserve the specific interests of the American business circles.

Looking back, one finds out that the issue of liberalising trade is traditionally polarising the specific actions carried out by the American political circles: while ever since WTO inception and since signing North-American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Democrats insist on introducing more strict disciplines and rules in the subsequent juridical instruments and the Republicans exert pressures on establishing a biunivocal link between trade and their country's security.

What has President Trump done under the circumstances? He campaigned (and succeeded to a

large extent) for a "melting-fusion" between the Republican approach – based on the binomial foreign policy-national security – with the Democrats' traditional restrictionist ideals ending up in "America First" formula. In other words, without completely eliminating the differences of opinions between the two poles of the American political stage, Trump succeeded, to a certain extent, to alleviate the otherwise real tensions between Republicans and Democrats.

Yet the abovementioned tensions reverberate at the international level at a time when the new global order in the field of international trade – so much sought after by the USA in its position of main world "negotiator"² – proves to be much different than that which characterized the Cold War period. Thus, practically all countries adopted, at least partially, the principles of market economy. In Russia, the economy – most of it state-controlled – became hybrid, by picking up certain market norms and standards of Western origin. In its turn, China's economy has a continuously expanding private sector securing jobs for more than 80% of the total employees nationally and contributing with more than 60% to GDP creation³.

That is why presently the USA, the EU and other states, erstwhile staunch supporters of the almighty freedom of world trade, are feeling seriously threatened by China's and other countries' competition, places where an accelerated process of optimizing the economic activity by taking over and implementing exponent mechanisms and instruments of the market economy is taking place. In other words, it is exactly the former promoters of unhindered commercial

1. Adopted by consensus by WTO member states in November 2001 in Doha (Qatar), the Declaration marked the launching of the 10th round of multilateral trade negotiations meant to lead to further liberalising the world trade. Technically, the main negotiations field are: agriculture; markets access of non-agricultural products; services; intellectual property; trade and development; trade and the environment; trade facilitation; WTO rules; settling the disputes. For links to official sources dealing with these subjects see https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dda_e.htm

2. As of 2012, the USA lost to China the position of undisputed leader of world trade.

3. See for the private agricultural sector Maeromata, Juan, "Why the United States Is Wary of the WTO", in *Stratfor Reflections*, December 14th, 2017. Available online: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/why-united-states-wary-wto/entry/jisconnect> . Accessed December 20th, 2017.



exchanges in goods and services who pose today as promoters of an obvious neoprotectionism motivated by the protection of national interests.

Hence, for instance, the more and more accentuated American pressures on China for the latter strictly observes the principles of market economy especially in what concern: (i) funding the activity of state owned companies; (ii) protecting the intellectual property rights; and (iii) state intervention in setting up the prices of goods and services on the domestic market. The stage has been reached whereby when needed, the USA is suggested to put pressure on China economically, even using instruments and practices non-compliant with the WTO principles, rules and disciplines. Moreover, the exit of the USA from WTC it is mentioned sometimes as an extreme alternative!

It is obvious such a threat is not sustainable as if materialised, it would have catastrophic consequences for all the participants to the global commercial exchanges, the USA included and in particular. For the real protectionist "tsunami" that will follow after such a step would be practically lethal for the entire world economy.

On the other hand, even if it appears to be a more realistic approach, reforming WTO would be extremely difficult as the basic principle of the way the organisation works is consensus. It is difficult to imagine that possible major initiatives to that purpose could meet the agreement of all the 163 WTO members.

Due to these considerations, a less bellicose initiative of the main Western economic players – the USA, the EU and Japan -, namely a pro-free trade joint declaration that was adopted at the WTO summit in Buenos Aires is to be noted. The declaration expresses the signatories' decision of acting together – through WTO and other international institutions – for "eliminating the unfair and protectionist practices of distorting the markets used by third countries".

The document stresses explicitly such practices as granting unlawful subsidies for exports, carrying out forced transfers of technologies as well as excess output capacities in certain industrial sectors⁴.

The abovementioned tripartite declaration is, without a doubt, a veiled yet firm warning of China for not completely fulfilling the commitments concerning the introduction and implementing the market economy rules, criteria and practices. The three signatories of the Declaration alluded thus to maintaining current China's treatment of no market economy (much easier for probing dumping and unlawful subsidies to Chinese exports). In other words, the declaration aims at the sensitive point of China's exports, as many of them are done at either dumping or subsidised prices.

In the meantime, the parties' worries concerning triggering a real trade war between the USA and China deepened as either of the two players brought arguments backing its own position. So, Washington insists that China's unfair commercial practices (especially China's making conditional the American investments on transferring the technologies to the Chinese partners in the joint ventures set up on the latter territory) are depriving the American workers of their jobs and fully contributes to deepening the USA's trade balance deficit. As far as they are concerned, the authorities in Beijing consider that the said commercial imbalance is due to more complex factors, among which they mention the

4. See *Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference News Archive*. Available online https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/archive_e/mc11_arc_e.htm . Accessed on February 14th, 2018.

automation of manufacturing processes, the increased efficiency of "supply chains" set up by the Chinese, etc., are leading to an accelerated increase of the competitiveness of Chinese firms⁵.

Is a real trade war between the two world's commercial giants looming? It seems so, as long as the USA made the first step: an executive order issued by President Donald Trump increased substantially the tariffs for steel and aluminium imports.



TOWARDS A "GAS WAR" IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN?

Lamya FOUAD, Beirut

Geopolitics of natural gas in Eastern Mediterranean

While the governments, mass-media, research institutes and geostrategic think-tanks are discussing in seminars, at round tables and in specialised publications about energy transition, the regions holding oil and natural gas deposits are witnessing, more or less on the backstage, fierce battles waged for the access to the new hydrocarbons deposits. And one of the areas making headlines in this fierce confrontation is Eastern Mediterranean where the existence of a huge potential of natural gas has been confirmed during the last years and the interested coastal states are now either in the initial explo-

ration phase or are hectically preparing to start their exploitation commercially.

Discovered two years ago only, off-shore the Egyptian economic zone at right angles to Damietta, Zhor gas field (already exploited by the the Italian ENI and Russian NOVATEX and ROSNEFT giants) is deposit of 30,000 billion cu.m. which added to older and smaller discoveries may, according to experts, make Egypt become soon the "Middle East's natural gas center".

Israel, in its turn, discovered no less impressive deposits of natural gas in "Tamar" block (238 billion cu.m.) and "Leviathan" block (an area of 860 sq. km. and reserves of 539 billion cu.m.) and aspires to become an important player on the natural gas market especially for the European West. Cyprus and Greece which have discovered as well gas deposits, have in mind the same target and are jointly co-operating with the European Union for building an underwater gas pipeline crossing, from the extraction platform, the Cypriot and Greek territorial waters and, possibly, the Albanian ones reach Italy and implicitly the Western European consumers. Two important obstacles stand, for the time being, in front of this project: on the one hand, Brussels seems to opt out this program devised initially as a measure to avoid the dependence on Russian natural gas; on the other hand, a new player emerged – Lebanon – which claims the entire Block 9, where Israel already made explorations. Yet negotiating a *modus cooperandi* between Tel-Aviv and Beirut is difficult so much as Lebanon, a member of the International Convention for Maritime Law, announced it will not give up "a single drop of water" while Israel, which did not join the abovementioned convention tries – via the Trump Administration – to exert pressures on Lebanon for reaching a disputed reserves sharing agreement.

Although the real magnitude of the total gas potential of the Eastern Mediterranean was not established with certainty yet, the stake is substantial especially for Egypt, Israel, Cyprus and Lebanon, all of them aiming not only at comfortably covering the domestic needs but also at joining the club of important conventional energy play-

5. For a deeper review see Ryan Hass, "How to Avert a Trade War With China", *Brookings Institution*, February 27th, 2018. Available online at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/02/27/>. Accessed on March 5th, 2018.

ers on the global market.

As against all these developments and debates, Turkey could not stay idle.

The Turkish government demands Cyprus to halt, under the new circumstances, all its explorations/exploitations of maritime fossil energy and that this is otherwise one of the conditions agreed by the international community as a way towards resuming the political process of reuniting the island. Nicosia, in its turn, demanded the European Union's mediation stating that the island's fragmentation was the result of an Ankara's violation of the principles of international law, so that reuniting the island should not be dependent on the economic activities carried out by Greek Cypriots in their territorial waters. Now, Turkey doesn't hide its decision of intervening "manu militari" both against the Greek Cypriots and against Egypt in case "its rights will be neglected" including in case of a too "advanced" cooperation in the energy field between Egypt and Cyprus.

To the south, Israel announced the conclusion, on February 18th, 2018, of a historical contract for supplying natural gas from Tamar-Leviathan blocks to Egypt, raising protest reactions from

the government in Beirut. Yet, at the same time, the conclusion by the Lebanese government of an export contract for hydrocarbons from an offshore block sparked off "perplexity".

One should not forget that in this merry-go-round of interests, economic and geopolitical calculations, a role in a "conservation stage" for the time being, will have a post-conflict Syria in which maritime economic zones the existence of no less important natural gas reserves are estimated and which, sooner or later, will attract attention and will bring in a new player on the Eastern Mediterranean energy map.

A "war" for natural gas. The Israeli-Lebanese case

In 2013 Lebanon drew up a mapping study which stressed that several blocks, namely 8, 9 and 10 belong to it and Beirut stated, based on that, that the Israeli presence in Leviathan area represents "an unacceptable violation of the Lebanese territorial sovereignty". The most complicated Gordian knot in this dispute is block 9 which is crossed by the border between the Lebanese and Israeli waters and the respective block was, as of 2012, the subject matter of

MAIN GAS FIELDS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA



American mediation attempts whereby Washington proposed sharing the area on a 65% basis for Israel and 35% for Lebanon and, later on moved to 60% for the Israeli side and 40% for Lebanon and both proposals were rejected by the government in Beirut. Encouraged by Iran, the Secretary General of the Lebanese Hezbollah intervened in this game and declared that the organisation he leads is ready, upon the acceptance of the Lebanon's Supreme Defence Council to launch missiles aimed at the hydrocarbons platforms installed by Israel in the disputed block. In his usual rhetorics, Hassan Nasrallah said that: "in a new confrontation with the Jewish state, the main front will focus on the maritime borders. Lebanon's economy, he added, could determine the way the economic and financial potential will develop and that depends to a great extent on the exploitation of the country's gas reserves. For the Lebanese, this is a life and death issue...The natural gas of Eastern Mediterranean belongs, according to Hassan Nasrallah, to Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, to Arab countries and one could say to the Islamic world. We are not afraid anymore of the Israeli-American bombardment jets: the rule of the game changed now".

2018 witnessed an increase of the potentially explosive tensions between Lebanon and the Jewish state and, in theory, there could be factors aggravating this climate to the verge of a direct confrontation such as:

- The United States is not any longer controlling alone the Middle East energy equation and that deprives the Israeli side of a solid support point in the process of solving the dispute.

- At the same time, huge Italian, French and Russian oil and gas companies are involved in this process either by signing exploitation contracts with Lebanon or by announcing the intention of doing so in the future.

- The involvement of Hezbollah's political and military formations in this file is a potentially disruptive

involvement having in mind that Israel is not interested and would not benefit from a new military conflict with the Lebanese neighbour.

- The repeated protests issued by the government in Beirut against Israel's decision of building a separation wall along its northern frontier with Lebanon which would mean, according to the experts in Beirut, the inclusion of portions of the Lebanese territory into the Israeli one due to topographical configuration reasons.

In a new attempt of resolving the controversies, Donald Trump sent, on February 17th, Davit Satterfield, the acting Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs, to Jerusalem where he had talks with the Israeli minister of Energy, Yuval Steinitz, and, soon after, Rex Tillerson, the top American diplomat, to the Lebanese capital. None of the two diplomatic initiatives succeeded in creating a perspective of solving the energy dispute.

Israel doesn't have for the time being either the mood and the regional climate conducive to a new armed confrontation with the Lebanese state and the pro-Iranian militias Hezbollah and the same thing applies to Lebanon due to domestic political and economic reasons and, the same time, confronted with a difficult electoral year, and a political class deeply divided by sectarian, partisan and mercantile interests.

A new energy geopolitics and a competition surrounding it is about to evolve in the Middle East. And, the competition for energy resources is just beginning.



THE BRUA PIPELINE – ROMANIA’S ENERGY HIGHWAY

Professor Eng. Marian RIZEA, Ph.D.

Ecological University of Bucharest

Faculty of Management and Environmental Engineering

Full member of DIS/CRIFST Romanian Academy

It is official! The biggest Romanian strategic energy infrastructure project of the last 30 years has started – the **BRUA** pipeline (Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Austria). The technical and financial coordinates of the project are briefly presented in Figure 1.

After being systematically attacked by those who desired supremacy in delivering oil to the vest of Europe and bypass Romania, namely the oil pipeline Constanta-Pancevo-Omisalj-Trieste and the NABUCO pipeline, the project of the BRUA pipeline is about to become reality, a true throb of pride of the people who opened the global oil and gas industry 160 years ago.

For several years, a team of elite professionals from SC Transgaz Medias, led by Director Gen-

eral Eng. Ion STERIAN, PhD., has worked with discretion, professionalism, dedication and diplomacy and put the Romanian public in front of a fait accompli: the beginning of the works for the BRUA pipeline (Bulgaria-Romania-Hungary-Austria), a real highway that will place the contemporary Romania on the energy map of Europe. The difficult efforts - due to domestic and foreign restrictions for obtaining the necessary resources to achieve the greatest and most important project in the post-revolution era (financial, human, technical and technological resources) proved to be successful and as of **14 April 2018**, the winner tender (99% Romanian companies), signer of the contract (the **INSPET SA association Ploiesti** – leader, PETROCONST SA – associate, MOLDOCOR SA – associate, HABAU PPS PIPELINE SYSTEMS SRL – associate, IRIGC IMPEX SRL – associate, SUTECH SRL - associate, TIAB SA – associate, ROCONSULT TECH SRL - associate) will start works for the BRUA pipeline - Phase 1 – with a worth value of 288, 742,



446.15 RON, no VAT.

For experts, **BRUA** is for Romania today and tomorrow the same as what meant for Romania, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the construction of the first oil pipeline **Bustenari-Ploiești-Băicoi-Fetești-Constanta Port** (1904 - a real birth certificate of the current SC CONPET SA Ploiesti), supported, designed

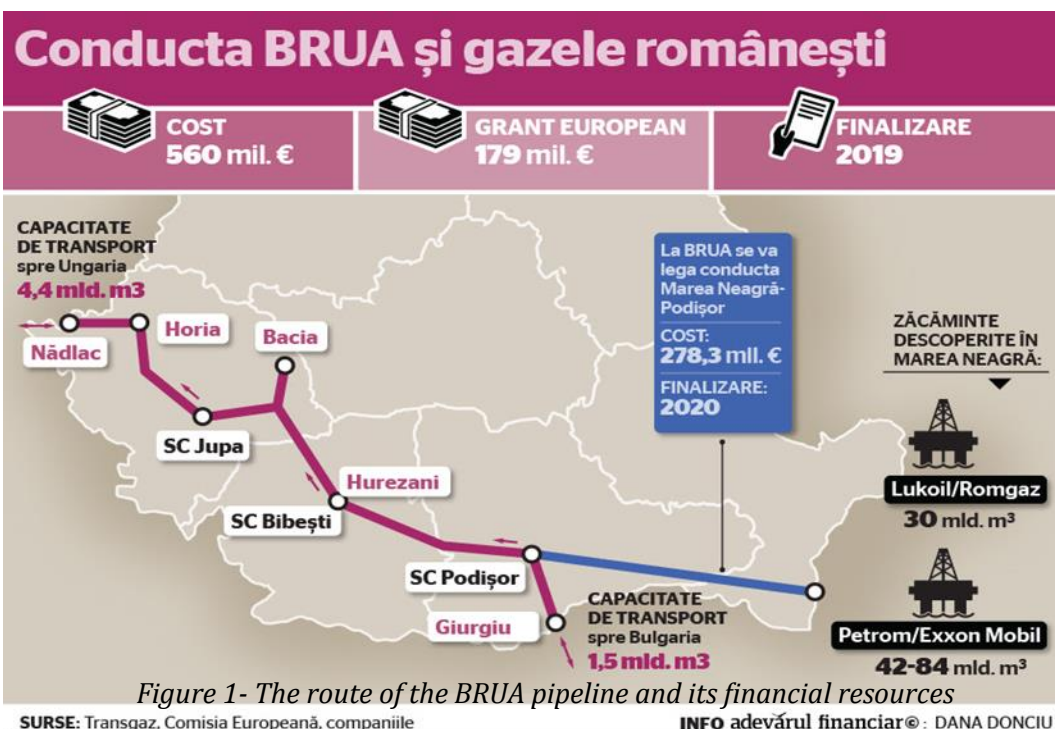




Figure 2 - Constanța-Pancevo-Omisalj-Trieste oil pipeline

and built by the engineer, director, professor, mathematician, minister, academician and man of genius, has given the generations after him constructions and works of art that are still functional, among which we can mention: the railway Ploiesti-Predeal, the rail bridges Adjud-Targu Ocna, Barlad-Vaslui, the double bridge (road and railway) over Siret from Cosmești, the

river ports Braila and Galati and not least, his masterpiece, the double bridge over the Danube at Fetesti-Cernavoda (1895) and the organization of the Third World Petroleum Congress in Bucharest (1907) etc.

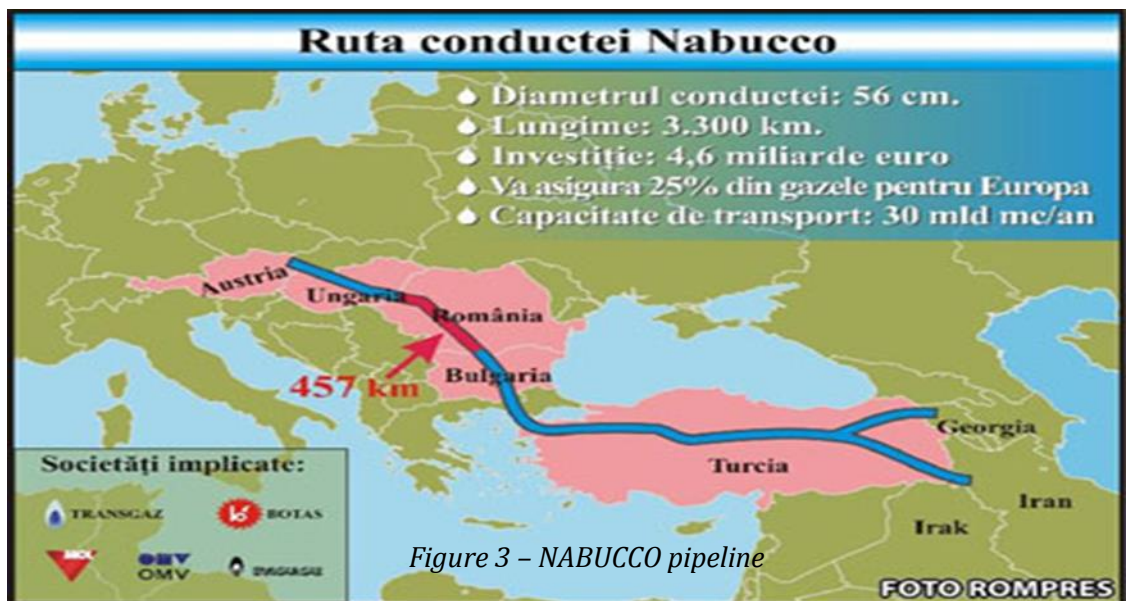


Figure 3 - NABUCCO pipeline

Born after the failure of the NABUCO project, the BRUA pipeline has sound geo-strategic coordinates and it is a unique chance for Romania that the operator SC Transgaz SA is involved in this important project with European and North American support. Obviously, there will be opponents. There are already "loud voices" and "strong writings" talking about looting the natural gas resources in the Black Sea, their seizure by Hungary and Austria etc. etc., without saying that this pipeline is important primarily for Romania. It will create numerous jobs, it will attract top technique and technology, we will become major players on the regional and European energy market and it will increase chances for dialogue and cooperation with third parties, including the GAZPROM competitor. If the important natural gas reserves discovered in the continental shelf of the Black Sea by LUKOIL-ROMGAZ Medias companies (over 32 billion smc) and EXXON MOBILE-OMV PETROM (estimated to be between 42-84 billion smc/nmc) are sent to the West, it does not mean that someone will prevent Romania to buy them for industrial or domestic consumption ahead of

Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Slovenia or other potential beneficiaries. Opinion leaders should explain to the public that the gas reserves in the Black Sea have no connection to TRANSGAZ, but with ANRM, which holds responsibility to negotiate the royalty fees.

No matter how hard will be the competition to access the European gas market, the promoters and operators of the BRUA pipeline deserve the respect and support of all the Romanians that are proud of the past, present and future of the nation and assume both failures and victory with dignity and responsibility!

A survey to date of the geopolitical and geo-strategic evolution coordinates in the Black Sea and East Mediterranean region (recent negotiations between Russia and Israel in extracting gas from the Levantine/Leviathan deposit and the maneuvering behind the scenes of major world powers to be present in the area under various reasons) will "emphasize" even more the BRUA pipeline on the world map of energy interests.



The Secret Services of the 21st Century and Security Issues

A DILEMMA OF THE MODERN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

**Dr. Octavian DUMITRESCU**

As the intelligence services have modernized and perfected their work, they have become increasingly well equipped with sophisticated modern equipment, based on advanced technology. Simultaneously, as a necessity, new procedures and techniques appeared for combining the activities of collecting and processing information obtained by human personnel with the capacities of the technology and equipment possessed by the intelligence structures and elements, including the compilation and processing of data for the production of intelligence. That is why there is a series of components of the intelligence systems based on the way they are obtained: HUMINT, SIGINT, IMINT, ELINT, OSINT, TECHINT etc. In this context, we briefly mention the following: the expression HUMINT (Human Intelligence) relates to the data and information obtained by human elements; SIGINT (Signal Intelligence) refers to the information obtained by intercepting and using the communications of the opponent; IMINT (Imagery Intelligence) relates to the data and information obtained by imaging; ELINT (Electronic Intelligence) refers to the data and information obtained by electronic means; OSINT (Open Sources) refers to the data and information obtained from open sources; TECHINT (Technology Intelligence) refers to the data and information obtained by technical means in general.

As it was normal, along with the technical and technological developments, as well as with improvements made to the procedures and methods for collecting and processing information, a rivalry appeared between the various components of the intelligence services, probably originating more from the rivalry between people who conduct the intelligence operations than from the respective capacities for gathering information.

Currently, the rivalry under discussion has led to some conclusions more or less correct, but often subjective, on which of these components is more effective and needs to be in the attention of the leaders and, of course, of the budget. The dilemma is not new in the modern intelligence work, but it has taken new forms and causes serious debates within these structures.

The evolution of the intelligence domain, commonly named in international language as "intelligence", has led to the appearance of information operations - an essential component of informational war - which include complex and ample activities for data collection and information processing and analysis and the dissemination of the results. Information operations integrate all forms and methods of collecting and processing data and information, the human forces involved and the equipment and devices used to achieve the purpose of these actions. A brief definition shows that intelligence operations consist of a series of actions "carried out in order to influence the enemy's intelligence and intelligence systems, while protecting the friendly intelligence and intelligence systems". (Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, USA, 1998). Information operations best illustrate how the dilemma of the alleged antagonistic relationship HUMINT - TECHINT needs to be understood.



A study of the American specialists, published in January 2017 - Cyber Intelligence and Security - analyzes in detail this issue in the chapter entitled *An Intelligence Civil War: "HUMINT" vs "TECHINT"*, showing that the rivalry between the human component and the technical one can have two levels: on the one hand, there is not enough young blood able to use the tools available for collection or, on the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, not all efforts seem to be invested in bridging the two parts of intelligence in order to enhance their content and maximize the capacity of their talent.

The human factor involved in the process of collecting information is as old as war, being the fastest and most adaptable method for collecting, processing and operating on targets and objectives, says the study mentioned above. From this perspective, there is the belief that man plays the primary role in the collection, processing and use of data and information, which sometimes leads to the underestimation of the equipment and machinery used to process information, even if some of them can operate exclusively through technical means. This bias has sometimes had a significant impact on the thinking of those who used information, including at the highest level of decision, traditional political and governmental players that became skeptical about the information obtained mainly automatically from equipment. Let us look at some significant aspects of the **importance of the human factor** in modern information:

- Collection is just one side of the processes related to the gathering and use of information obtained by the human factor and what is obtained by processing them is an important part not only for the decision making process, but also for the development of operational capabilities on the field and sometimes for altering the enemy's capabilities;

- The information obtained by the human factor proved crucial to locate and neutralize the opponent and enforce the actions related to national security;

- Those who favor the primacy of the human factor in intelligence can justify that in situa-

tions where technical capacities could not meet the needs of information, the human operative elements have succeeded even in extremely sensitive or dangerous conditions, showing adaptability and flexibility in the field;

- The importance of the human factor for the intelligence systems has been demonstrated by the professional agents, by their ability to integrate into a hostile environment, act with discretion and efficiency on the objective, identify new details and adapt to the frequent changes occurring in their actions. The timeliness and accuracy of data collected and transmitted and adaptability are also specific human factor.

The technical or technological factor of the intelligence equation under discussion resides in the use of equipment and machines of any kind in order to collect, transmit and process data and information and obtain information for the process of decision making. The technical means, in which modern technologies and scientific advancements are used, have turned into conventional instruments for collecting information from various domains of activity. While the technological level of these equipments has developed, they have turned into traditional informational capabilities and at present there are no longer intelligence operations or actions that do not use technical means and instruments. The following aspects can be significant for the **technological factor of the intelligence domain**:

- Technology and science have provided new information capabilities in modern wars and armed conflicts, so that the new equipment can be used including in conventional actions of collection and processing data and information, especially for the informational use of the cyber world, for the procurement of cyber tactical information, for the analysis of satellite images or for target locating techniques using UAVs and drones;

- The intelligence technological means secure human intelligence forces and fighters away from the risks and dangers of the battlefield, thus avoiding possible loss of human lives;

- The data and information obtained from the

technical means of collecting, especially those based on images, may include infinitely more objectives, targets, they can be stored and re-used for subsequent analysis or reinterpretation. The intelligence obtained by the human factor can also be used, but once the man left the target, he cannot add further details to the information originally obtained;

- The continuous evolution of technologies allows the expansion of the collecting and data and information processing equipment, their volume constantly growing and becoming more complex, which would otherwise require the involvement of a growing number of people for the processing, storage, use and possible reuse of the achieved information products;

- Last but not least, the human factor most often uses the technical means for collecting and storing data and information so that it would be transmitted to beneficiaries.

There are definitely numerous details on the contribution of the technology to the information processes, but not this aspect is important in this context. What is important is the way in which the two intelligence components are combined, both between themselves and with other means and methods of collection and processing. We primarily emphasize that *there is no contradiction or rivalry between HUMINT and TECHINT*, they are two complementary components and none of them comes with anything against the other, each contributing to the success of the intelligence mission. Of course, at certain times or under specific conditions, one of these components may prevail in the information system, but this does not mean that there is a logical balance in their importance and use.

The technological advancement in the last decades in the digital domain has led to new dimensions of information, both in terms of collecting and processing information, making it impossible to strictly separate HUMINT and TECHINT. **It would be a great error to place the two components into a contradiction.** There is no rivalry and the problems that may occur, probably insignificant, must be resolved by combining them, by smartly using the possibilities and ca-

pabilities of each one of them. The proliferation of technologies and technical means of collection (satellites, UAVs, drones) and the possibility to collect data and information from open sources (Open sources - OSINT) led to the opportunity of reducing the use of HUMINT elements, but only in the sense that in some conditions, it may be replaced by technical means with similar results, and this does not exclude human involvement in all the intelligence processes and stages.

At the same time, the intelligence structures and the intelligence community sometimes face the need to carry out long, continuous surveillance missions and collect information, which would mean that HUMINT agents would be subject to extreme efforts. The extended capacities of TECHINT can compensate for the limitations of the human factor, creating the continuity appropriate in these situations. Of course there are areas where the human factor would not be as effective as the technological possibilities, such as aerial or space surveillance, which can ensure the collection and processing of data and information over large areas with accuracy and offering more detail. The human factor is not ruled out in this case either, being involved in operating the respective equipment, correcting flight routes and setting or changing missions.

The dilemma of the modern intelligence services has touched the **financial** aspect of collection and processing. The study mentioned above shows that, in terms of funding, the human factor is far less expensive than the technical one. The selection and training costs of human agents can be more beneficial than the purchase of technical means. The multi-purpose use of HUMINT elements brings flexibility, analytical mind and ingenuity in the field as compared to a cold machine that has only one utility. There are also followers of the opposite version, meaning significant expenses in order to maintain agents in a good shape, trained for missions, constantly recruiting and retraining them, which is not a bad idea either. The dilemma should not be pushed so much; things should not be complicated beyond a certain limit. As a result, in some cases, TECHINT has drawn financial attention and wrong priorities as compared to the invest-

ments and support of HUMINT. This approach is incorrect because the budget priorities should be effective and balanced, so that the technological capabilities could benefit from the fundamental techniques and tactics of HUMINT, shows the study mentioned at the beginning of this material. Moreover, *there is no efficient and relevant TECHINT component without an equally valuable human touch*; it must be seen as a crucial advantage both for intelligence operations and for data analysis, without creating an unnecessary rivalry.

Funding should focus on research, development and operational effort, smartly combining TECHINT and HUMINT. Reality has shown that the objective of obtaining adequate, clear and viable information can be best achieved when HUMINT and TECHINT capabilities are combined and the expansion of the confrontation in the cyberspace and in the collecting techniques makes this merger to become inevitable. An important step in this equation would be to admit that people cannot be completely removed from the intelligence sector and the implementation of scientific instruments and technological capacities prevents human losses and enhances the capabilities of gathering and processing intelligence.

The dilemma of the HUMINT-TECHINT rivalry seems to have appeared artificially, without a realistic foundation, and separat-

ing the two areas of intelligence is false and unnecessary, harming success in this area, to the detriment of prioritization and innovation in the domain of information. Information communities in developed countries such as the US or Israel are ruling out this issue and work to prioritize techniques integrating HUMINT and TECHINT in the intelligence operations and policies. The false dilemma can be overcome only through an integrated approach of the development of the two components in this field and by accommodating in the domain the followers of using relevant tools and methodologies. Also, new specialists are needed, able to address both components in an integrated way and understand the importance and necessity of this association, perhaps a new generation of intelligence operatives.

In conclusion, the rivalry between certain parts of the intelligence domain must not take root and affect the efficiency and usefulness of information processes or the quality of the information product. The dilemmas related to these aspects should be carefully analyzed by the factors responsible in the field and mitigated to extinction, so that such clashes or contradictions are possible in no circumstances. The results of the intelligence activity indicate the real solution to the intelligence equation and they eliminate any dilemma.



US Army upgrading communication networks

Ionuț CALAFETEANU Army's full mobile network designed to provide

The Army's Warfighter Information Network

The tactical communication program of the US Army named "The Army's Warfighter Information Network (WIN-T)" is a high-speed, high-capacity tactical communications network which is used to distribute classified and unclassified information through all echelons of Army command by means of voice, data, and real-time video. WIN-T had been developed and fielded in three increments.

WIN-T Increment 1 is a stationary network for command posts and units at battalion-level and above. It provides a full range of at-the-halt data, voice, and video communications. The Army began fielding WIN-T Increment 1 in 2004 and completed fielding in 2012.

WIN-T Increment 2 is intended to be the Army's initial mobile network providing combat vehicles with on-the-move communications, mission command, and situational awareness. It was first fielded in October 2012 and as of beginning of 2017, WIN-T Increment 2 had been fielded to 14 Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), 7 Division Headquarters, and the U.S. Army Signal School. The program remained on track to field two units per year.

WIN-T Increment 3 is intended to be the

on-the-move mission command for all Army commanders - from theatre to company level. The programme was restructured in 2014 due to cost concerns but some capabilities had been incorporated into the WIN-T Increment 2 program.

Following subsequent assessments had been identified shortcomings regarding integrating WIN-T equipment with M-1126 Stryker, M-2 Bradley fighting vehicles and M-1 Abrams tanks as well as cyber-security vulnerabilities.

The Army leadership has expressed its concerns about these systems that may not work in the conditions of future modern battlefield and proposed to stop WIN-T Increment 2 generating over 2 billion USD in savings that would be reinvested in adapting the communication network for interoperability and removing the security concerns, improving survivability to electronic warfare, the cyber-capabilities, and the mobility of command posts. It is possible that in the future rectifying WIN-T network deficiencies could become Army's number one modernization priority. Justly one can consider that having a modernized fleet of combat vehicles, combat units, and modern headquarters is of little value if there is not a commensurate communications, command and control, and intelligence capabil-





mation to prepare the units for modern warfare of tomorrow.

Fixing Army's network and the budget

At the end of September 2017, at a hearing of the House Armed Services air and land Subcommittee, the Army representatives mentioned that they plan to change a scheme regarding the WIN-T programme and to close it after a year but at the same time to purchase other updated hardware and software. This change of plan came as a review that Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley ordered of all the services' networks and this was to be considered a major change for the fiscal year 2018.

Gen. Milley considers that the actual systems are unprotected enough to hacking and jamming, easy to hit by enemy artillery fire and not rapid enough in a high-intensity war against Russia or China. The major change of acquisition strategy of the Army was not happy news for the Committee members who were trying to pass the budget.

In the Committee hearing the Army Chief Information Officer Lt. Gen. Bruce Crawford mentioned that the current Army network was designed and developed for static battle fields as in Iraq or Afghanistan but does not meet the needs of a modern warfare. As a matter of fact the Army will halt procurement of the Mid-Tier Network Vehicular Radio (MNVR) and legacy Command Post of the Future (CPOF) and also the procurement of War-fighter Information Network-Tactical (WIN-T) Increment 2 at the end of 2018.

The Army intends to spend in 2018 more than half billion USD, as reprogramming resources to fix the network by improving survivability to electronic warfare, cyber capabilities and the mobility of command posts. During a recent exercise it took 40 to 50 hours to get equipment of WIN-T up on air whilst the Russians, can spot a target with drones and have artillery rockets inbound in minutes.

ity.

The equipment and the systems that the US Army will operate in the next twenty years are planned and deployed in our days but the digital battle-space is advancing at a much higher rate and so the platforms and systems that are deployed today will be obsolete in two decades.

The US Army is short of funds from 7 to 9 billion USD needed to modernize as the cyber-attacks are levelling the warfare space. To keep the flow of information free the Army needs the most advanced technologies of today and by this way to maintain its advantage in the era of the digital warfare. Speed is as always an important factor of the warfare but with the huge and increasing amount of data it becomes more and more difficult to control. Army analysts could miss important warnings if they lack the capabilities to collect and manage the relevant information.

Automation supports Army readiness and became an important factor for the battle-space known as data analytics that helps the intelligence to be processed. By speeding the data analytics process the analysts' capabilities to turn a huge amount of data into useful information and understand the threats more easily are enhanced.

In order to free up the cyber-analysts to actively hunt the threats the defence technology and networks should be protected and supported by self-healing programmes that can detect and eliminate the damages similar to the human body immune system. A sustained modernization enables the Army to maintain running in good conditions the platforms and to allow auto-

The US Army may not have stealth fighters or nuclear submarines but from the foot soldier navigating the front lines with GPS, to the drone taking pictures overhead, to the officer making plans at the command post, to the supply clerk ordering spare parts back at base, a modern army depends on a complex network of computers sharing data over land lines and radio waves.

But land lines can be cut, radio waves can be jammed, and computers can be hacked. In their unofficial invasion of Ukraine, Russian forces routinely shut down Ukrainian communications, leaving units isolated, deaf, and blind. In a world where computer power doubles every 18 months, one can't afford an acquisition cycle that takes 15 years to field new technology. Cyber-security in particular has to be updated constantly or it becomes obsolete.

It is not expected the Army to propose some comprehensive mega-program to fix its networks in a single great leap forward. The review is likely to look at small, incremental upgrades that the Army and industry can turn around in quickly. At the same time, however, an army in the field may need to discard some advantages of modern networks: live video from drones, video teleconferencing, and massive packets of PowerPoint slides.

The Army is trying also to standardize its computer systems across more than 400 units in the next two years. The objective is a "single software baseline," where every unit has the same set of information technologies but some units don't even have the hardware to run the latest program updates, so they need new computers too.

In the normal course of events, the Army would field new mission command equipment for 80 to 100 units in any given year and take five years to update every unit in the force. The goal is to convert as a priority around 280 units in the US and Pacific in 2018, while units in Europe, the Middle East, and the rest of the US will follow in 2019.

To cope with the pace, the Army's mission com-



mand training team has tripled and instead of sending out trainers to every unit to teach them about new gear, the training team will have troops come to several centralized locations around the country. Fort Campbell, Kentucky and Fort Hood, Texas, have already been identified as training sites.

The logistics software called Global Command and Control System - Army (GCCS-A) runs on different hardware than the Battle Command Common Services (BCCS). The standardization plan is to update GCCS-A to run on BCCS machines, eliminating around 100 dedicated servers and 1,000 client laptops associated with GCCS-A across the Army.

Similarly, there are a dozen different versions of Command Post of the Future (CPOF) software used by different units. The single software baseline will reduce that to one standard CPOF, the most updated version.

The current effort is not going to end in 2018. In 2019 the Army will launch a next-generation Common Operating Environment that will continue to simplify its networks. The Army's study of its network shortfalls should produce a comprehensive strategy that can withstand the scrutiny of the Congress. That is the goal the acting Army Secretary Mark Esper and the Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley should follow and the strategy must also go beyond purely technical solutions and address how the Army acquires and funds that technology.

The Senate slashed funding for the Army's net-

work, WIN-T, out of concern that its transmissions were too easy for an advanced adversary like Russia to detect, hack, and jam. One of the criticisms the Army has had over time from the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) was that they don't have a modernization strategy and to provide them additional information. Following that situation everything is brought back to the people with the power to take decisions regarding the budget.

The Army has one system that was designed to withstand not only jamming but electromagnetic pulse from nuclear bombs. The system called SMART-T is a militarized satellite terminal upgraded to use Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) satellites but this was never issued to all the low-echelon tactical units that might use but at brigade, division or at corps level. Even higher headquarters didn't bother bringing the system to Afghanistan or Iraq, where the jamming threat was not existent instead they have been parked in motor pools for years.

The Army leadership considers that the existing communication system is also too complicated for soldiers and that they should get easy the artillery support, emergency resupply or medical evacuation for the wounded. In a Korean crisis or Eastern European war US Army would have to deploy their equipment and personnel, set up networks and keep them running with little or no support. The more complex the system, the more shipping containers and personnel a unit must deploy, feed, and defend to keep it running.

One thing the Army can simplify in the near term is its variety of software. Currently it uses three different command-and-control programs, each with multiple versions in service and upgraded to a slightly different degree. The Army tries to get to one common software baseline by 2019. This modernization is critical to creating an army that can keep communicating and fighting as an organized force in the face of its state of the art adversaries. Having in mind the financial constraints of the Army the Acting Army Secretary personally was involved in the re-



views of the network situation in autumn 2017.

The cyber-security in the narrow sense is not enough. The Army can't focus on hackers sending malicious code over the internet, it also has to worry about electronic warriors jamming, triangulating for artillery bombardments, or eavesdropping on radio transmissions.

The Army must be ready to deploy rapidly, anywhere, anytime, to shape, prevent, and win, against any enemy in any domain being cyber, space, air, land, or maritime and any environment being megacity, desert, jungle, arctic. The Army wants from industry a network to be able to operate, and the soldiers using it must be able to reliably communicate, in all those conditions, under attack by any threats, and on the move, without stopping to set up radio antennas or lay fibre optic cables.

The network must be simple and intuitive, easy for soldiers to operate without extensive training or constant tweaking. The network must also be easy to upgrade as technology changes. Finally, the network must be secure against cyber-attacks, resilient to the damage of those

attacks that do get through, and able to transmit its wireless signals in a way the enemy cannot easily detect¹. The Army relies on industry for the task of having such a network.

A key component to conduct mission command or what is called command and control is to be able to communicate - voice, digital, video, and so on - in any environment, globally and against any enemy.

Electronic warfare review

During 2017 an electronic warfare (EW) review took place in a separate form with the goal to give commanders from platoon to corps the ability to shut down enemy radio and radar as easy as they call in airstrikes and artillery. It is an important part of the Army's plan to hit simultaneously future enemies from all possible angles, a concept called Multi- Domain Battle.

The EW review looks at active measures to detect, deceive, and disrupt enemy radio and radar. Those are capabilities the Army almost entirely disbanded after 1991, only to relearn from Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine how devastating they could be.

The Army's current plan to rebuild electronic warfare focuses on combat brigades and neglects higher-level formations, like divisions and corps. In a relatively static, low-intensity guerrilla war like Afghanistan or Iraq, where enemies



operate in small groups with light weapons, each Army brigade could operate more or less independently in its assigned zone. Higher headquarters mostly just provided support. But in a fast-moving, high-intensity war against a nation-state like Russia, which masses forces and manoeuvres them long distances, single brigade could easily be overwhelmed. Higher headquarters like divisions and corps must direct operations over a much wider area on a much tighter timeline.

There are also new cyber/EW teams training with brigades, new EW specialists with new planning software in brigade headquarters, new equipment (mostly sensors) rushed to a front-line brigade in Europe, and new long-range jammers in development that are supposed to enter service not earlier than 2023. The goal is to give headquarters at every level their own cyber and EW expertise, if not necessarily equipment. Each headquarters needs specialists able to tell commanders what options are available and then translate their orders into specific effects. Those effects may then be produced by the unit's own equipment or by another unit providing support.

In support of the Army specialists a new field manual on Cyberspace & Electronic Warfare Operations had been written (FM 3-12) and the procedures for cyber and electronic warfare



1. The technical terms are Low Probability of Detection (LPD) and Low Probability of Intercept (LPI).



are similar with the traditional artillery. The goal was not to place additional burdens on tactical echelon commanders and staffs. At least since World War II, one of the US Army's great strengths has been its ability to rapidly concentrate firepower from multiple places and units in support of a single point. Now, the Army wants to do the same with the invisible artillery of electronic and cyber warfare and to have a similar effect in electronic warfare and cyberspace, layering multiple effects on high priority targets.

Navy and Army networks

The Navy wants the Army's help win a future Multi-Domain Battle with China, but to get it, the two services have to connect through a simple, robust network using small and rapidly-launched satellites. The two services need a regional command-and-control network for voice commands and data that can be run off a single small satellite.

This is in keeping with the early Concept of Operation developed for the Air Force's Operationally Responsive Space program (ORS). ORS seeks to end the US military's dependence on highly capable, complex and expensive satellites. These multi-billion-dollar masterpieces would take months or years to replace if an adversary shot them down.

Beijing invests heavily in land-based missiles, which two years ago were elevated to an independent branch of service, the PLA (People Liberation Army) Rocket Force. China relies on land-based missiles against enemy aircraft, ships, and ground targets, a tactic known as Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD). The US could do the same from the Pacific's many islands, rather than depend primarily on airbases and ships.

The Army could perform three key missions (1) Air & Missile Defence, protecting US air bases, (2) Land Attack, striking enemy launchers, sensors, and bases and (3) Anti-Ship, sinking enemy ships at sea. In all three missions the Army provides the same advantage, it has highly manoeuvrable, flexible units that are not fixed at a site, like an airfield.

Army already has some hardware for this role: the aging ATACMS² missile fired from HIMARS³ trucks and MLRS⁴ tracked launchers. The service is also developing a longer-ranged replacement, Long-Range Precision Fires (LRPF) - but LRPF's range is still limited by the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty to less than 500 kilometres.

"Cluster bases" would allow aircraft to play a shell game with the enemy by relocating repeatedly among a group of nearby airfields. This is a key reason the Marines bought the F-35B Joint Strike Fighter, so they could scatter the planes in



2. The Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) is a surface-to-surface missile (SSM). It had initially a range of over 160 kilometres with solid propellant. An ATACMS launch container has a lid patterned with six circles like a standard MLRS rocket lid.

3. High Mobility Artillery Rocket System

4. Multiple Launch Rocket System



the event of war and take off from a wide variety of locations.

Ground units would have some advantages over ships. Warships are always moving and they can move faster than ground units, and in the Pacific they have more room to manoeuvre. But ships are also large metal objects on a flat surface. HIMARS trucks are much smaller and can hide among radar-confusing clutter like buildings, trees, and rocks.

The Multi-Domain Battle concept has gained importance because it proposes to update the common effort for a new era of simultaneous conflict on land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace. But to fight together, the services need to talk to each other, which is where the network comes in.

At this moment Army frequencies aren't actually optimized for maritime and air combat and to be inside a Common Operational Picture (COP) costs money. The services need to share basic data, such as what friendly units and targets are at what coordinates, and plain - text orders, much like the telegraphic transmissions. Low-bandwidth transmissions are more difficult



to detect, triangulate, and jam and cheap mini-satellites can be launched into orbit in large numbers being much cheaper than the powerful communications ones.

Linking Army and Navy missile defence networks

Navy experts concluded last year that it is completely possible to plug Army missile defences into the Navy fire control network. That could make an obscure system called Naval Integrated Fire Control - Counter-Air (NIFC-CA) the electronic backbone of a continuous defence against Russian, Chinese, Iranian, or North Korean air-strikes and missiles. NIFC-CA could potentially coordinate also offensive strikes.

The chief of US Pacific Command, Adm. Harry Harris has told the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA)⁵ and the US Naval Institute - 2017 Conference that he wanted the two services' systems to interconnect. The only difficulty faced is the connectivity.

Missile defence requires exquisitely accurate data on the target, because of trying to hit one missile moving at hundreds of miles an hour with another missile moving at hundreds of miles an hour. A tiny error can mean a miss. Accurate data that's delayed by a slow connection is as bad as inaccurate data that arrives at once. Adding more sensors of different types and from different locations gives more perspectives on the target and can improve accuracy.

Ironically, back at the start of the NIFC-CA effort, the Navy tried to get the Army and Air Force to participate and make it a joint effort, but that failed. Today, the Army is in fact developing its own missile defence network, called IBCS⁶, to link its

5. The Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) is a professional association that is working with the Government since 1946.

6. The Integrated Air & Missile Defence Battle Command System (IBCS).



disparate systems such as Patriot⁷ and THAAD⁸.

Bringing Army missile defence into NIFC-CA maybe does not require waiting for ICBS to be developed, instead it could be connected the existing Army systems to NIFC-CA one by one in a step by step approach. If NIFC-CA can similarly bring in other surface-to-surface missiles, like the Army's ATACMS, it might evolve into an all-purpose, all-service system of fire control that can either shoot down enemy missiles in flight or blow them up pre-emptively on the launcher.

Vulnerabilities of Army Air and Missile Defence

Russia is deploying new treaty-breaking, nuclear-capable cruise missiles. The Russian Federation is also fielding sophisticated cyber and electronic warfare systems that can hack or jam US defences against such missiles. In fact, no military mission is more dependent on high-speed data networks than air and missile defence - but no military system is more vulnerable than those networks.

The US Army is trying now to build its future air and missile defence force and the leadership considers that such a network is needed. In air and missile defence, both inbound threats and outbound interceptors move at very high speed and in this case success requires doing rocket science in real time and it is a matter of seconds to deal with. In the worst incident of the 1991

Gulf War, Patriot missile batteries' computers were left on too long without rebooting, which allowed minor inaccuracies to compound until the targeting programme was 0.3433 seconds off - enough to miss an incoming Scud that killed 28 Americans and wounded 98 more.

The big innovation in IBCS is that it will not just transmit targeting data, but fuse data from multiple sensors about a single target and by getting data points from all of the sensors and getting the best of them to create one composite track in time and space. That allows the Army to take advantage of all its sensors against an adversary adept at jamming, electronic deception, and stealth, it is particularly important to get multiple radars looking at the same target from multiple angles.

The Army has built, at Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, a cyber-security test stand on which can build virtual air and missile defence network to know where gaps and to improve the design of it. Similarly to the battle space and the need to control every inch of terrain is the control of cyber and the network but the conclusion is that one cannot defend all of it because it is simply indefensible. What commanders need to be able to do is to identify where the critical assets are within the network and to prioritize.

Let the leaders off the electronic leash

The key to win the fast-paced and brutal battles of the future, Army generals must let their



7. The MIM-104 Patriot is a surface-to-air missile system.

8. Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) is an American anti-ballistic missile defence system designed to shoot down short, medium, and intermediate range ballistic missiles in their terminal phase.



subordinates off the leash and not to micromanage and overly specify everything the subordinate has to do, all the time. More initiative could have profound effects on tactics, training, and technology. The Army needs to decentralize leadership to make decisions when the subordinates may not be able to communicate with their higher headquarters.

The rule of the mission command is in which superiors give subordinates clear objectives without prescribing how to achieve them but in practice is different. The art of mission command was lost because of technology.

High-tech adversaries, however, have studied how to cut the lifelines of the Army. Even the Taliban managed to tap into an improperly secured video feed from Predator drones, but Russia and China have well-equipped electronic warfare units to jam American transmissions. They have their own drones to pinpoint targets and precision weapons to strike them.

Since 2011 the Army have been active in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism against relatively lightly armed and low-tech enemies but there are many other types of war, the one that is perhaps most difficult and challenging is a larger war against an almost equal or a much more capable state adversary in very rugged,

urban or complex terrain. In such conditions a stationary force will lose initiative, the logistics lines and the lines of communications are going to be under intense stress, the electromagnetic spectrum is going to be at least degraded if not completely disrupted and the elements will still have to fight and win.

To be successful the Army wants to fight what it calls a Multi - Domain Battle, which requires small tactical units to disperse and keep moving even when cut off - both physically, behind enemy lines, and electronically, by jamming or hacking of communications networks. Some situations may impose the leaders to disobey a specific order or a specified task, in order to accomplish the purpose.

Communication networks of the future will have a decisive impact on the result of the battle taking into consideration the concept of the Multi - Domain Battle and that the conflict on land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace is developed at very high speed due to the technology involved. The decisions that are taken now and the budget support for the Army networks will be confirmed to be right or wrong in the years to come.

Adapted from Raytheon "The Army overhauls its network for future war"

Military Technology and Equipments, New Weapon Devices

On Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAV) (II)



An **unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV)**, also known as a **combat drone** or simply a **drone**, is an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that usually carries aircraft ordnance such as missiles and is used for drone strikes. Aircraft of this type have no onboard human pilot. These drones are usually under real-time human control, with varying levels of autonomy. They are used in drone strikes.

Equipment necessary for a human pilot (such as the cockpit, armor, ejection seat, flight controls, and environmental controls for pressure and oxygen) are not needed, as the operator runs the vehicle from a remote terminal, resulting in a lower weight and a smaller size than a manned aircraft.

While several nations possess and manufacture unarmed UAV, only the United States, Israel, China, Iran, Italy, India, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey are at present known to have manufactured operational UCAV as of December 2015.

In 1971, Foster was a model airplane hobbyist and had the idea this hobby could be applied to building weapons. He drew up plans and by 1973 DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) built two prototypes powered by a

modified lawn-mower engine and could stay aloft for two hours while carrying 28-pounds of load.

In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel used unarmed U.S. Ryan Firebee target drones to spur Egypt into firing its entire arsenal of anti-aircraft missiles. This mission was accomplished with no injuries to Israeli pilots, who soon exploited the depleted Egyptian defenses. In the late 1970s and 80s, Israel developed the Scout and the Pioneer, which represented a

shift toward the lighter, glider-type model of UAV in use today. Israel pioneered the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for real-time surveillance, electronic warfare, and decoys.

In the late 1980s, Iran deployed a drone armed with six RPG-7 rounds in the Iran-Iraq War.

Impressed by Israel's success, the US quickly acquired a number of UAVs, and its Hunter and Pioneer systems are direct derivatives of Israeli models. The first 'UAV war' was the first Gulf War: according to a May 1991 Department of the Navy report: "At least one UAV was airborne at all times during Desert Storm." After the Gulf War successfully demonstrated their utility, global militaries invested widely in the domestic development of combat UAVs. The first "kill" by an American UAV was on October 7, 2001 in Kandahar.

In recent years the U.S. has increased its use of drone strikes against targets in foreign countries and elsewhere as part of the War on Terror. In January 2014, it was estimated that 2,400 people have died from U.S. drone strikes in five years. In June 2015 the total death toll of U.S. drone strikes was estimated to exceed 6,000.

Presented by Cornel VAIDA

On Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAV) (III)



The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) spent more than \$3 billion in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) research and operations in the 1990s. Considering that a B-2 bomber alone costs around \$1.5 billion, it wasn't a bad investment: Today, UAVs play a very important role in military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as surveillance missions across the globe.

The MQ-1B Predator, an unmanned, lightly armed surveillance aircraft, is the direct predecessor of the MQ-9 Reaper. The Predator has a 49-foot (14 m) wingspan and can climb to about 25,000 feet (7.6 kilometers). There are somewhere between 320 and 400 individual Predator drones in use today. The use of UAVs like the Predator and the Reaper is growing rapidly within the Air Force, and other branches of the military are showing interest in them as well. The Air Force intends to double its use of the Predator by 2010 and will quadruple the number of UAV air crews it trains each year.

The MQ-1 Predator unmanned drone was intro-

duced in 1996 and was first used in a war zone during the 78 days of the 1999 Kosovo conflict.

About two dozen UAVs (Predators as well as other models) were used for surveillance purposes during NATO air operations over Kosovo, and nine of them were shot down.

In February 2001, the Predator served its first offensive purpose, successfully firing an armed Hellfire missile in a test trial. It destroyed an unoccupied target tank in the process. One year later, a missile fired from a Predator killed an alleged planner of the 2000 attack on the USS Cole in Yemen. Five other suspected al-Qaida members also died in the attack.

Aside from a quick ambush of an unsuspecting target, Predators don't pack much of a punch. Enter the MQ-9 Reaper, which was designed to address this issue. While the Predator is a surveillance platform with weapons capabilities, the Reaper is a hunter/killer with surveillance capabilities.



The 140 mph (225 km/h) speed of a Predator is suitable for hovering back and forth in the skies in search of troop movements, the coordinates of which can be called in to a nearby fighter jet. The 300 mph (482 k) top speed of a Reaper, on the other hand, is better suited for quickly targeting and destroying enemy personnel and vehicles that are on the move. The Reaper can fly about nine times farther and twice as high as the Predator, and

it doesn't require any fighter jets for backup. It proved its muscle when it began flying missions in October 2007.

Presented by Cornel VAIDA

Leading Articles, Studies and New Analyses

2017 Strategic Survey

The Annual Assessment of Geopolitics International Institute for Strategic Studies, London

2017 Strategic Survey, the Annual Assessment of Geopolitics, provides an ample, in-depth and impartial analysis of the global political and security environment.

The book includes 11 Chapters and an Index: Chapter 1, Prospectives, referring to a fracturing of the strategic relations within NATO, following the warning of the United States on the rapid and real increase of the budget of the member and partner states for the alliance and the security support offered by Washington.

Chapter 2, Drivers of Strategic Change, includes IISS experts' analysis of the developments that have occurred with the strategic leadership of certain regions and in the whole world. The book makes an annual review of geopolitical events covering a period of 12 months, from mid-2016 to mid-2017.

Chapter 3 has four different parts analyzing the future of the World Trade Organization, the global political and security environment, focused on North Korea's nuclear program, urbanization, violence and city-led policy-making, cyber war.

Chapter 4, Asia-Pacific refers primarily to China's foreign policy, the concern over the North Korean threat, its missile and nuclear programs, since it continues to dominate the security landscape in the Asia-Pacific region.

Chapter 5, South Asia and Afghanistan, refers to the changes in the field of goods

and taxes and the demonetization of the 500 and 1,000 rupee notes, aiming at stopping corruption by annihilating "black money".

Chapter 6, Sub-Saharan Africa, refers to the security changes that have occurred in this region, the budgetary constraints have narrowed democratic failures and security threats, especially insurgency.

Chapter 7, Middle East and North Africa, refers to the continuation of turmoil and wars, with increased number of victims, though the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) has eroded, while the territorial and political opportunism has accelerated in the freed regions.

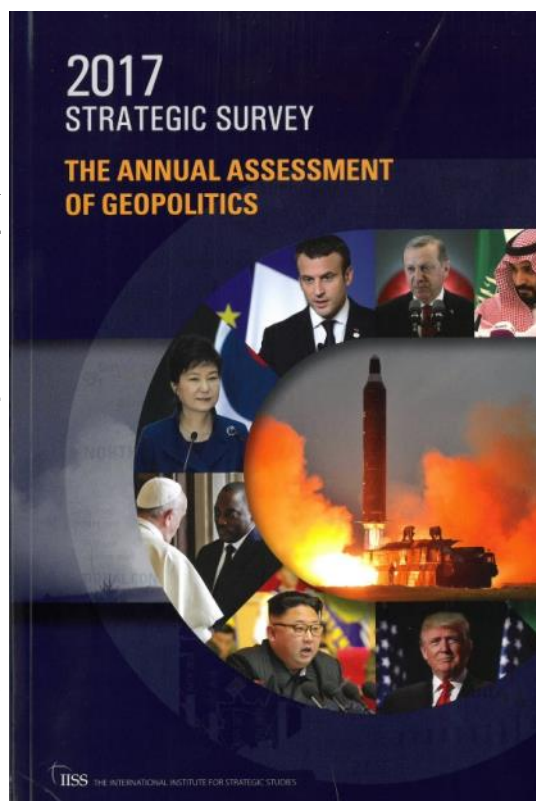
Chapter 8, Russia and Eurasia, notes that the policy of this region has continued to be dominated by the relation between Russia and the United States, the involvement of Russia in the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East has continued according to the foreign policy concept launched by Moscow in 2016.

Chapter 9, Europe, with the appreciation that populism, the threat of the EU dissolution and the impact of the policy promoted by the Trump Administration, as well as migration, financial fragility and terrorism have continued.

Chapter 10, Latin America, includes the shock of the national referendum on the peace agreement with FARC, which ended a 52-year long conflict.

Chapter 11, North America, notes that the election of Donald Trump as President was a shock and that after the election, his troubled policy and statements have often led to scandal and trouble.

Presented by Cornel VAIDA



THE REUNIFICATION (Realities, Costs, Benefices)

Authors: Dan DUNGACIU, Petrișor PEIU

**Publisher: Litera – Bucharest – Chisinau,
2017**

“This volume is in no way propaganda for the Reunification. It is just a lucid, realistic comment about what is now happening on the left bank of the Prut and about the future of the people there. If nothing happens in the coming years, the Republic of Moldova will remain a border area, a no man's land, a land without a strategic future, depopulated and abandoned by the most active, innovative and talented people.

And yet, as long as nearly eight out of ten inhabitants of the people living between the Prut and Dniester say that their native language is Romanian (though some still call it Moldovan), the option of Romania's reunification with Moldova is still valid” reads the description of the book at its launch at the Gaudeamus International Book Fair in Bucharest, on Friday, 24 November 2017.

In the first part of the book, which is entitled *The Union and Reunification – the Burden of our History*, Ioan Aurel POP says: “The Reunification is a noun expressing a wish and it is related to the political fate of the Romanians, although this political goal should have been completed a long time ago. In fact, the Romanians' desire for political union was achieved in 1918, but the Romanians did not know, could not or did not struggle enough to keep it untouched over the decades and centuries. (...) The union and unity have always been present in their souls, “minds, hearts and literature”, as George Barițiu said”.

Nicolae DABIJA writes in *“God Rejoices when Brothers are Together”*: “The two Germanys have reunited, the two Vietnams have reunited, the two Yemens have reunited and only the two Romanians are still separated on the maps of the world”.

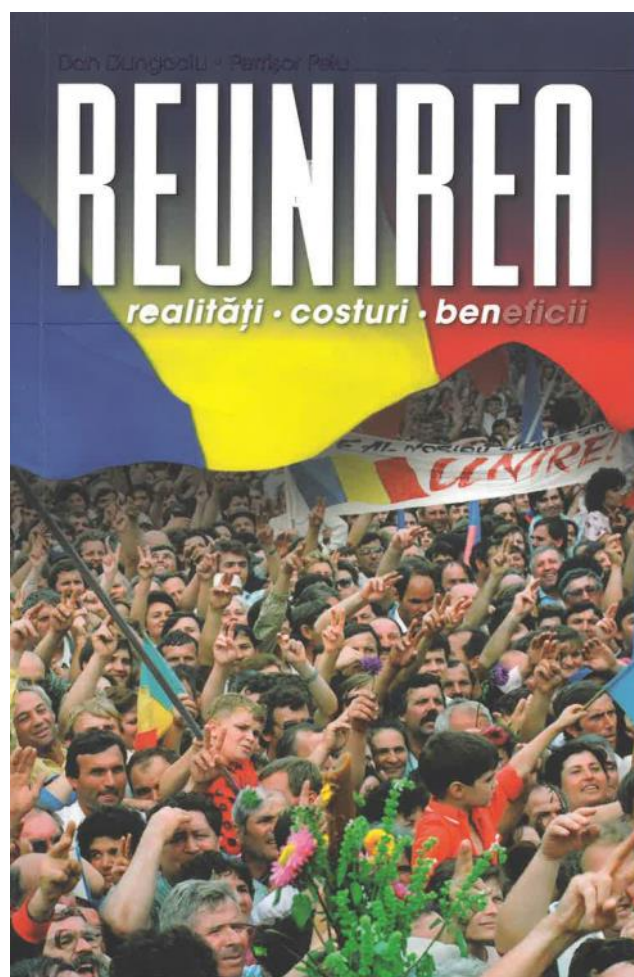
In the *Introduction – The Union as an Exercise of Awareness*, the authors refer to what they aimed at with this book by publishing it before the Cen-

tenary and they write that: “The first objective is to put before the readers the issue of the relations between the two states through a grid of identity, providing key concepts and perspectives that allow a better understanding of the extremely complicated situation over the Prut (the first two parts).

Secondly, the book can be read as an analysis and presentation of the political events in the Republic of Moldova, especially after 2014, as a continuation of the research dedicated to this territory in our previous works (the following two parts).

Thirdly, the volume contains the most comprehensive analysis to date of the economic situation of Moldova and, on the side, an evaluation of the costs of the reunification of the two countries following the German model – an undisputed mark of the Department of Economic Research of the Black Sea University Foundation (BSUF), including a roadmap of the process (the fifth part)”.

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

Ambassador, University Professor,
Director for the Middle East at the *Geostrategic Pulse*

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



Dr. Octavian DUMITRESCU

Director for the Black Sea Wider Area at the *Geostrategic Pulse*.



Cornel VAIDA- Director INGEPO Consulting

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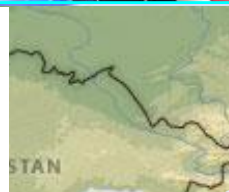
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