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PER LA DIFESA



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DI STUDI STRATEGICI

Osservatorio Strategico 2019 Issue 4



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Osservatorio Strategico

The US withdrawal from the INF treaty and its impacts on Europe and the Atlantic Alliance

On 2 August 2019, the US decision announced on 1 February to quit the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF treaty), became effective. Signed by the then US President Ronald Reagan and the then Secretary general of the Soviet communist party, Mikhail Gorbachev, on 8 December 1987, and entered into force on 1 June 1988, the treaty bound the parties to destroy all their land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometres (300 to 3,400 miles) by 1 June 1991. In quantitative terms, the treaty has led to the destruction of 2,692 short- and intermediate-range missiles in three years: 1,846 Soviet and 846 American. The treaty was an epochal event also from a symbolic point of view. For the first time, an international agreement led to the elimination of a whole category of weapons capable of carrying nuclear warheads. In the last years of the Cold War, intermediate range missiles deployed in Europe had become a symbol of the US-USSR nuclear confrontation. For this reason, too, European countries deeply resented the US decision, despite the justifications provided for it and despite the structural limits that marred the treaty itself even at the time of its signing.

European doubts started surfacing in October 2018, when the first rumours about the US intention started circulating. At that time, it was the German government to voice its fears about the potential impact of a decision labelled as «regrettable» and «posing difficult questions for us [Germans] and for Europe»¹. However, Berlin's position was not generally accepted. Since some time, the eastern NATO allies were expressing their worries about supposed Russian violations of the treaty, while, soon after the US announcement, Great Britain expressed its support to Washington's decision pointing out the need to «hammering home a clear message that Russia needs to respect the treaty obligation that it signed»². Russia, on its side, had already assumed quite an ambiguous position on the treaty. In 2005, its authorities put forth a possible unilateral withdrawal; later, they proposed to the White House (which refused) a joint revocation. Moscow also proposed the idea to expand the treaty's scope at global level, inviting other countries to join it; however, since PRC's opposition to this development is well known, this move has generally been regarded as propaganda more than as a real proposal.

Moscow's compliance to the INF treaty's provisions is the main bone of contention. Since mid-2000s, rumours have grown about the Russian efforts to circumvent the treaty limits (that inhibit the parties from possessing, producing, or flight testing GLCMs with a range capability of 500 to 5,500 km, or from possessing or producing launchers of such missiles) by developing a new weapon system (SSC-8 according to NATO, aka Novator 9M729) that Moscow deems, instead, compliant to the provisions. Washington raised the issue for the first time in January 2014, providing intelligence data on Russian tests conducted since 2008; at the same time, it informed its NATO allies³ that, since July 2018, repeatedly stated their support of the US position. After the official announcement of the US withdrawal from the INF treaty, for example, NATO issued a press point explicitly supporting the US decision, blaming on Moscow «the sole responsibility for the demise of the Treaty» and affirming that, while not intending to start the re-nuclearization of

1 *Foreign Minister Maas on the US announcement that it is withdrawing from the INF Treaty*, 21 Oct. 2018, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/maas-inf-treaty/2151874>

2 *UK backs Trump withdrawal from Russia nuclear treaty*, "The Guardian", 21 Oct. 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/oct/21/uk-backs-trumps-nuclear-treaty-withdrawal-blames-russia-for-breakdown>

3 *Missile Defense Project, SSC-8 (9M729)*, Center for Strategic and International Studies Missile Threat Project, Washington, DC, 4 Sept. 2019, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/ssc-8-novator-9m729>.

European security, the Alliance «will respond in a measured and responsible way to the significant risks posed by Russia's SSC-8 system» adopting «a package of measures to ensure NATO's deterrence and defence remains credible and effective»⁴.

In several quarters the risk has been remarked that these events could be just the first steps of a new nuclear escalation affecting Europe and – potentially – the world. UN Secretary General António Guterres, for example, took this stand on the eve of the US withdrawal from the treaty; a treaty the Guterres himself, in the same occasion, defined «an invaluable brake on nuclear war»⁵. The main fear is that Washington and Moscow decisions could led on the one hand to a new US-Russia competition (also with the revamping of old projects put temporarily on the shelf, like the US seems willing to do), and fuelled, on the other, nuclear proliferation in theatres until now perceived as (relatively) secure, like Asia. Despite the INF treaty formally bound only its contracting parties, it was common opinion, in fact, that it projected its shadow also beyond the European borders, acting as a moderating force for all the actors who – lacking it – would have freely developed their nuclear capabilities. Opposing this vision, those who support the US decision to withdraw from the treaty, point out the fact that its existence never prevented, e.g., PRC from proliferating and that – quite the contrary – the treaty itself allowed PRC to exploit the constraints that it imposed to the US to fill at least part of the gap existing with Washington⁶.

In this perspective, it does not surprise the fact that Beijing harshly reacted to the idea that new US IRBMs could be deployed in the Asia-Pacific, as US Defence Secretary, Mark Esper, put forth soon after the official end of the INF treaty⁷. However, there are some doubts about the fact that this could be a real strategic change. It has been noted that the return of the US intermediate-range nuclear missiles in the Asia-Pacific theatre will only slightly affect the regional balance, due to the disparity of the different forces, the limits of the Chinese nuclear capabilities and the fact that the US already can deploy in the region the other components of their “triad”⁸. In the same way, in Europe too, it will take some time before the White House decisions could evolve into real initiatives. The deployment of a new generation of intermediate-range nuclear missiles depends, first of all, from the consent of the European allies and from their willingness to host the launchers on their territories; a willingness that cannot be taken for granted due to what seems their lack of activism, the technical problem that the Aegis Ashore anti-missile system is facing and – first of all – to what seems to be the «deep-seated reluctance» of the Old Continent «to accept that nuclear issues are back on the [international] agenda at all»⁹.

4 *Press point by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on the INF Treaty*, Brussels, 2 Aug. 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_168183.htm?selectedLocale=en. For NATO statements on the INF issue see *NATO and the INF Treaty*, 2 Aug. 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_166100.htm.

5 J. Borger - D. Sabbagh, *Lapse of US-Russia arms treaty will heighten missile threat, says UN*, “The Guardian”, 1 Aug. 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/01/inf-treaty-us-russia-arms-control-to-end>.

6 L. Seligman - R. Gramer, *What Does the Demise of the INF Treaty Mean for Nuclear Arms Control?*, “Foreign Policy”, 2 Aug. 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/02/what-does-the-demise-of-the-i-n-f-treaty-mean-for-nuclear-arms-control-intermediate-nuclear-forces-new-start-strategic-arms-limitation-nonproliferation-trump-russia-arms-control-explained>.

7 M. Martina, *China warns of countermeasures if U.S. puts missiles on its 'doorstep'*, “Reuters”, 6 Aug. 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-defence/china-warns-of-countermeasures-if-u-s-puts-missiles-on-its-doorstep-idUSKCN1UW044>; A Yuhas, *China Warns U.S. Against Sending Missiles to Asia Amid Fears of an Arms Race*, “The New York Times”, 6 Aug. 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/world/asia/china-us-nuclear-missiles.html>.

8 W. Riqiang, *China's Calculus After the INF Treaty*, IPI Global Observatory, International Peace Institute, New York *et al.*, 2019, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/05/chinas-calculus-after-inf-treaty>.

9 On the (few) European reaction to the US withdrawal from the INF treaty see N. Witney, *Nothing to see here: Europe and the INF treaty*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 5 Aug. 2019, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_nothing_to_see_here_europe_and_the_inf_treaty; as a benchmark see M. Lafont Rapnouil - T. Varma - N. Witney, *Eyes tight shut: European attitudes towards nuclear deterrence*, ECFR Flash Scorecard, European Council on Foreign Relations, December 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/specials/scorecard/eyes_tight_shut_european_attitudes_towards_nuclear_deterrence; on the technical problems hampering the implementation of the *Aegis Ashore* system cfr. M. Peck, *Europe Is Getting*

In fact, the end of the INF treaty will probably impact also of the other instruments forming the current nuclear control regime, such as the “New START” treaty that the Obama administration signed in 2010 to fix a cap to the US and Russian strategic forces¹⁰. The US administration has not yet expressed its official position on the future of the treaty (which expires in February 2021) but, according to some rumours, its renewal under the current form would be improbable¹¹. However, Washington’s will to “engage” the PRC seems doomed to fail in this field too, once again due to the imbalance existing between the two countries’ respective stockpiles, which would penalize the Chinese position. Technological development is another element that plays against the “simple” renewal of the “New STRAT”, fuelling, on the one hand, the US fear of Russian activism in the missile sector, on the other the Russian fear for US activism in the anti-missile systems sector¹². Despite the Senate’s willingness to simply extend the treaty’s lifespan, the US Ambassador in Moscow, Jon Huntsman, on behalf of the administration, has already labelled the “New START” as an old and weak agreement, also putting forward the proposal of negotiating – after its expiry -- «something altogether new» and more ambitious¹³.

The most immediate consequence has been a brand new frozen of US-Russia relations. In the past months, Moscow’s attitude towards the renewal of the “New STRAT” has passed from a substantial openness to an increasing closure, due to what it has presented as the tightening of the US posture¹⁴. To a certain extent, these are just diplomatic skirmishes; the same former National Security Adviser, John Bolton, once noted that the treaty will expire only in 2021 (possibly after the swearing in of a new President), so «we have plenty of time» to reach the final decision¹⁵. On the other hand, the end of the treaty (or its renewal into a different form) would allow the parties to re-launch several projects in fields ranging from hypersonic weapons and the related platforms to missiles (such as the US LRSO - Long Range Stand-Off Weapon, developed by Lockheed Martin and Raytheon), to the above mentioned anti-missile systems, such as the Ground-Based Strategic

America’s Anti-Missile Aegis Ashore System but..., “The National Interest”, 28 July 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/europe-getting-americas-anti-missile-aegis-ashore-system-69302>.

10 The New STRAT treaty (signed on 8 April 2010 and ratified between December 2010 and January 2011) aimed at drastically reducing the US and Russia nuclear stockpiles, giving them seven years to reach the target. The treaty limits each side to no more than 800 deployed and nondeployed land-based intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) launchers and deployed and nondeployed heavy bombers equipped to carry nuclear armaments. Within this total, each side can retain no more than 700 deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed heavy bombers equipped to carry nuclear armaments. The treaty also limits each side to no more than 1,550 deployed warheads, with one warhead for each deployed heavy bomber. All these targets have been reached by 5 February 2018. According to the provisions, the treaty remains in force until February 2021, a deadline that can be extended – with the agreement of the parties – until 2026. On all these aspects see A.M. Woolf, *The New START Treaty: Central Limits and Key Provisions*, CRS- Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, 5 Apr. 2019.

11 Seligman - Gramer, *What Does the Demise of the INF Treaty Mean...*, cit.; *Pillars of nuclear arms control are teetering*, “Financial Times”, 31 July 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/f040fb68-afca-11e9-8030-530adfa879c2>; S. Erlanger, *Are We Headed for Another Expensive Nuclear Arms Race? Could Be*, “The New York Times”, 8 Aug. 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/08/world/europe/arms-race-russia-china.html>.

12 *The Window to Extend New START Is Closing, and Fast*, “Stratfor”, 20 Mar. 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/window-extend-new-start-closing-and-fast>; on the US anti-missile strategy see *A Missile Defense Review to Intensify an Arms Race*, “Stratfor”, 6 Feb. 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/missile-defense-review-intensify-arms-race>.

13 A Osborn, *Future of last nuclear pact between Russia and U.S. uncertain: U.S. envoy*, “Reuters”, 14 Aug. 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-russia-arms/future-of-last-nuclear-pact-between-russia-and-u-s-uncertain-u-s-envoy-idUSKCN1V41RQ>; on the Senate’s favour to a renewal of the “New START” see, e.g., J. Borger, *US Senate pushes Trump to safeguard last Russian nuclear arms control treaty*, “The Guardian”, 18 Aug. 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/01/us-senate-pushes-trump-to-safeguard-last-russian-nuclear-arms-control-treaty>.

14 See, e.g., *Putin Says Russia Prepared To Drop Arms Control Treaty If U.S. Not Interested In Renewal*, “Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty”, 6 June 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/putin-says-russia-prepared-to-drop-arms-control-treaty-if-u-s-not-interested-in-renewal/29984790.html>.

15 Quoted in A Mehta, *One nuclear treaty is dead. Is New START next?*, “Defense News”, 23 Oct. 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2018/10/23/one-nuclear-treaty-is-dead-is-new-start-next>.

Deterrent (GBSD), developed by Boeing and Northrop Grumman; a set of initiatives that would allow the US to reduce the vulnerabilities that some observers have emphasized regarding the strength of their national scientific and technological bases, and the reliability, technological edge and operational readiness of their nuclear forces¹⁶.

As stated above, the US decision to leave the INF treaty has had a seemingly divisive effect on Europe but, in the end, the Old Continent has de facto accepted their withdrawal with no special reaction. However, the fact that NATO – beyond ensuring that its nuclear deterrent «remains safe, secure and effective» -- has chosen to adopt a wide set of measures in the fields of exercises, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, air and missile defences, and conventional capabilities¹⁷ cannot be without impact. Strengthening the Alliance's military presence in Central and Eastern Europe risks fuelling the contrast with Russia, which already sees in the *Aegis Ashore* system and in its alleged dual use conventional/nuclear capabilities the true reason of the failure of the INF treaty. The flight tests that the US DoD has already announced regarding three new missiles scheduled for deployment in 2021-25¹⁸ are another element that risks fuelling the process, not only for the fact that these missiles could be easily converted from conventional to nuclear. As it has been noted: «in 21st-century military logic, the boundaries between hypothetical conventional and nuclear conflict scenarios are fluid [...] in combination with other standoff missiles, the latest generation of conventional high-precision weapons pose a growing threat to secured second-strike capability – a real worry, particularly for Russia»¹⁹.

This too explains Russia's strategy of "flexing the muscles"; a strategy expressed, e.g., in President Putin's declarations of 1st March 2018 about the future deployment of the Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (HGV) *Avangard*, of the ALBM *Kinzhal*, of the Undersea Autonomous Nuclear Delivery Vehicle *Poseidon*, and of the nuclear-propelled cruise missile *Burevestnik*. Even if, according to the US intelligence, the last two will hardly be operational before 2027, the short-to-medium term deployment of the *Avangard* and *Kinzhal* systems could, in fact, impact on both the negotiation form the renewal of the "New STRAT" and the cohesion of the European front. Today, NATO European members seem deeply divided on the nuclear issue and on deterrence, due also to the decision of the Trump administration not to exert – in this field as well as in others – a true leading role. In this framework, it is not an hazard – in Moscow's perspective – betting on the fact that a stronger perception of the Russian threat could, in the end, consolidate this state of things, strengthening the trend toward the re-nationalization of the security and defence policies and deepening the cleavage between US and Europe and, within the latter, between countries more sensitive and less sensitive to the Russian choices.

16 Cfr., ad es., *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Capability*, The Heritage Foundation, Washington DC, 4 Oct. 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessment-us-military-power/us-nuclear-weapons-capability>.

17 *Press point by NATO Secretary General...*

18 The tests should regard a ground launched version of the *Tomahawk* (BGM-109) with a range of some 1,000 kilometres that could be deployed by early 2021, and two new ballistic missiles: the first one, with a range around 500 kilometres (but, according to some rumours, it could be even longer, due also to the fact that the US are no more bound by the provisions of the INF treaty), that should replace the ATACMS (MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System) maybe by 2023; the second one, a ballistic missile with a range of 3,000/4,000 kilometres, that, however, will not be ready for deployment before 2025.

19 U. Kühn, *The End of the INF Treaty: What Does it Mean for Europe?*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 31 July 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/07/31/end-of-inf-treaty-what-does-it-mean-for-europe-pub-79648>.

To Brexit or not Brexit

The prorogation of parliamentary work from 10 September to 14 October 2019 met with opposition from the Parliament. Following the ruling of the London Supreme Court of 24 September, which declared the prorogation null and of no effect, a resumption of parliamentary sessions was arranged from the following day. The MPs then returned to the House of Commons benches on September 25th.

British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson is a key "Brexiteer" or "Hard Brexit" advocate. His plans to manage the negotiations with the European Union (EU) in closed chambers were interrupted by the Supreme Court ruling, and the prime minister shall now start a plan B, to make sure that the United Kingdom implements Brexit on October 31st 2019. However, this plan B is currently unknown.

Many in the UK are asking for a further extension of the deadline, or are asking for other options, such as negotiating a new agreement, calling general elections, or also a referendum on the UK remaining in the EU is now an option.

In October 2019, Prime Minister Johnson and the United Kingdom as a whole, are playing a final game for the achievement or reversal of Brexit, an option that up until September could have seemed impossible, because it was against the democratic principle, as the electorate has voted in 2016 Brexit referendum. However, faced with the political and parliamentary hardship, it would seem to have become the least divisive and the most advantageous exit strategy.

From the point of view of defence policy, Italy's joining in the British 6th generation fighter programme "Tempest" is noteworthy. Italy is the second European State to join after Sweden, because since this summer and until the end of 2020, the United Kingdom has opened the programme for international partners.

The opposition in Parliament up till the prorogation

The British Parliament was reopened after the summer break from the morning of September 3 until September 10, 2019 at 2:00 PM, when activities were suspended. In the absence of the Supreme Court ruling, it was supposed to resume on October 14, 2019, on the Queen's speech.

In the few days of works, the Parliament was able to approve the "Benn Act". The bill presented by the labour MP, Hilary Benn, establishes that by October 19 the government shall present to the Parliament for approval an agreement with the EU or it shall succeed in obtaining an authorization from Parliament for the "no deal". Otherwise, the Prime Minister shall be compelled to ask the EU for a further postponement of the Brexit until January 31st 2020. To this purpose, a draft letter to the president of the European Council is contained in the text of the law. If the EU establishes another date, this shall be approved in 48 hours by the British Parliament.

Moreover, on September 3, the day of reopening, the Conservatives lost a majority in the House of Commons, as MP, Philip Lee, an opponent of Brexit, defected to the Lib Dems. Conservative majority in the previous months had reduced to just one seat. The simple loss of the majority does not lead to the fall of the government, unless a vote of no confidence is lost.

ON the very evening, the government was beaten in the Commons in the first vote on the scheduling of the Benn Act by a margin of 328 votes to 301. Among the opposing parties, 21 conservative MPs, who voted with the opposition, had the whip removed, thus reducing government majority to 298 seats, of which 288 are Conservative MPs and 10 belong to the DUP. The oppositions have 320 seats, among which 245 Labour, 35 Scottish National Party and 15 LibDem.

In the following "question time", Prime Minister Johnson announced the presentation of a proposal to hold early general elections on October 15, 2019, if the Benn bill was to be approved in the three readings scheduled for September 4 in the House of Commons.

According to the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, the Prime Minister shall obtain 2/3 of the total MPs votes to be able to hold early elections before the end of the 5-years term.

Labour MPs declared that they would not support early elections if the Benn Act had not been approved, although some MPs did not agree. Along the same lines of the Labour party were the other major opposition parties, such as SNP and Lib Dem.

On 4 September, the Benn Act was rapidly approved in three readings, winning 327 votes in favor, including the 21 conservatives MPs without whip, and 299 against.

On 5 September, Prime Minister Johnson's proposal for early elections on 15 October 2019 did not pass, not reaching 2/3 of all the MPS, or 484 votes. The Labour party decided to abstain, so the motion was voted by 298 in favor - almost all of the conservative MPs, the 10 DUP MPs plus three Labour MPs, and 56 against, including 28 Labour MPs, 13 LibdDem MPs, and 288 abstained, including 214 Labour MPs, all 35 SNP MPs, 1 LibDem MPS and three conservative MPs.

The Benn Act was then passed to the House of Lords where it was voted on Friday 6 September. According to some commentators, there was still a possibility that the Conservative Peers could slow down or block the legislative process, not allowing the law to enter into force before the prorogation. This eventuality did not occur; indeed the government had assured the Lords vote for September 6th. The Lords began examining the law on September 5, and sat until 1.30 am to propose amendments to the text, predicting a marathon filibuster session designed to derail the law. On the contrary, after a meeting with the Labour party, the conservative leader in the Lords, Lord Ashton of Hyde announced that all stages of the law would be completed at 5.30 pm on September 6th, and the conservative chief whip in the House had given a commitment, that any Lords amendment would be considered by MPs on Monday 9 September. The government assured that on the same day, the Benn Act would be ready to gain Royal Assent by coming into force on the same day, a few hours before Parliament was prorogued.

The government, which now has 30 days to fulfill the Benn Act, said that with the approval of the law, the United Kingdom could now choose between three options on Brexit: "a deal, no deal, or 'more delay'".¹

On September 9, Prime Minister Johnson's second motion on early elections did not obtain the required majority of 2/3 of all the MPs. On 10 September, after a long farewell speech by the Speaker of the House, John Bercow, Parliament was prorogued shortly after lunch.

The Supreme Court ruling

The former conservative Prime Minister, John Major, was the first to think of having recourse to a tribunal to avoid the Parliament prorogation in September 2019.²

The prorogation is a formal act issued by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister, is a "Royal prerogative" - such as the appointment of the prime minister, the granting of honors and so on - and as such cannot be legally challenged.

Instead, the correct application by the Prime Minister of the prorogation can be challenged. On this basis, SNP MPs and Scottish citizens presented claims in Scotland and England raising questions about the functioning of the Parliament. A lawsuit has been filed in Northern Ireland

1 "Brexit: Bill designed to stop no-deal 'will clear Lords'" BBC 5 September 2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-49588186>

2 "Major: I will seek a judicial review to stop Parliament shutdown" BBC, 10 July 2019 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-48934781>

claiming that the suspension can lead to the "No Deal", resulting in a violation of the Belfast agreements.³

On 4 September, a Scottish court rejected Prime Minister's act to be declared illegal.⁴ The Scotland's Court of Session, on the other hand, applying Scottish law, judged the act of the prime minister to be unlawful, and it had been used to "stymie" Parliament, with the aggravating circumstance of misunderstanding the Queen. According to the conclusions of one of the three Scottish judges: "*the circumstances, particularly the length of the prorogation, showed that the purpose was to prevent . . . scrutiny*" of the government".⁵

On the contrary, the London High Court did not find any unconstitutionality, but judged the prorogation was "purely political" and not a matter for the courts.

In order to have a definitive sentence, the UK's Supreme Court of London was sued by the government against the sentence of the Scotland's Court of Session, and by a private citizen, Gina Miller against the sentence of the High Court of London. On September 24th, after three days of sitting, the Supreme Court ruled with unanimous judgment of the 11 judges that Prime Minister Johnson's decision to suspend Parliament for five weeks was null and of no effect. The President of the Court, Lady Hale pointed out that the sentence did not concern "when and on what terms" Brexit occurs, but it was unlawful because it had the effect of frustrating or preventing the ability of Parliament to carry out its constitutional functions without reasonable justification for five weeks. Since the suspension was null, the Speaker of the House, Bercow, called the Parliament back from 11:30 am the following day, 25 September.

Prime Minister Johnson said he was against, but he accepted the sentence, and did not consider resignation.⁶

According to an editorial in the Financial Times, the prorogation is an example of how the Brexit process is undermining British rules and institutions, while the involvement of the judiciary helps to ensure that the "checks and balances" of the British unwritten constitution function as they should, although it is not advisable for the judiciary to be forced to intervene in politics.⁷

Italy joins Tempest

Italian newspaper "La Stampa" had given the breaking news that Italy would join the Tempest programme during the DSEi in London. This followed the meeting between the then Italian defence minister Elisabetta Trenta, and her British counterpart Ben Wallace, in Helsinki the 29 August 2019 alongside the informal summit of EU defence ministers.⁸

To tell the truth, it was unveiled in OSS 1 2019 that in the Multi-year Planning Document 2019-2021 of the Ministry of Defence published in July 2019, a new item was found: "development of a new European sixth generation fighter for the national air defence" which is the main mission of the Tempest as a successor of the Eurofighter Typhoon fighter.⁹

3 Lisa O'Carroll "Boris Johnson faces third legal battle over prorogation" The Guardian, 29 August 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/29/boris-johnson-faces-third-legal-battle-over-prorogation>

4 "Brexit: PM in new battle after Commons vote defeat" BBC 4 September 2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-49574217>

5 "Johnson suffers another self-inflicted Brexit blow" the Financial Times, 12 September 2019

6 Estelle Shirbon, Michael Holden "Brexit crisis deepens as court rules Johnson unlawfully suspended parliament" Reuters, 24 settembre 2019 <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-court/brexit-crisis-deepens-as-court-rules-johnson-unlawfully-suspended-parliament-idUKKBN1W82RX> ; "Supreme Court: Suspending Parliament was unlawful, judges rule" BBC 24 settembre 2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-49810261>

7 "Johnson suffers another self-inflicted Brexit blow" the Financial Times, 12 September 2019

8 Francesco Bussoletti "Difesa a 5 Stelle: Italia nel progetto Tempest, il caccia che sostituirà Eurofighter" La Stampa, 4 settembre 2019 <https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/2019/09/04/news/difesa-a-5-stelle-l-italia-aderisce-al-progetto-tempest-il-caccia-che-sostituirà-eurofighter-1.37413809>

9 Claudio Catalano "Il punto sul sistema da combattimento aereo futuro franco-tedesco" Osservatorio Strategico 2019, Anno XXI, no.1, CeMiSS, Roma

The declaration of intent was signed on 10 September 2019 at DSEi, by the two national armaments directors, General Nicolò Falsaperla, Secretary General of Defence, for Italy and Simon Bollom for the United Kingdom.

Italy is the second European State after Sweden to join the British programme for 6th generation fighter "Tempest", which from this summer and until the end of 2020 is open to participation for international partners. Membership of the Tempest was particularly supported by the CEO of Leonardo SpA, Alessandro Profumo, as the Electronics UK business unit of Leonardo already participates in Team Tempest from the beginning. Italy and Sweden could be followed by other partners who are not necessarily European, such as Japan.

To be in the first group of countries to participate is very important, as the Tempest is firstly a programme for the development of new technologies, and secondly for the development of the Aircraft. For this reason, the workshare will be key. Leonardo by means of Electronics UK has already secured a presence, but it is necessary to ensure the participation of the entire "country system" to equip the Armed Forces with a successor for the Eurofighter from 2040 and on.

Furthermore, Italian partnership marks a point in favor of the Tempest, if compared to the Franco-German SCAF programme. Italy, by joining Sweden and the other European (and not European) countries that will join the Tempest during the next year, could confirm that in the convergence of the two programs into one, the winner could be the Tempest. A possible partnership with France hoped for in the parliamentary report Larsonneur,¹⁰ would bring in the technologies for 6th generation fighters developed within the SCAF.

Conclusions

The British Parliament succeeded in a few days to approve the Benn Act which sets the agenda for negotiations with the EU, while the Supreme Court ruling, which will have no effect on the Brexit decisions, has allowed Parliament to reopen in the weeks leading up to the scheduled deadline of 31 October 2019.

There is currently no parliamentary majority on how to deal with Brexit, but there is a large bipartisan consensus that an agreement with the EU is needed.

The only way to secure an agreement with the EU on 17 and 18 October is a "backstop" solution.¹¹ The president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, said he was ready to examine alternatives to the "backstop" that are operational, realistic and acceptable to all EU member states, including Ireland.

However, as leaked by the EU Commission there are no solutions on the table for the backstop; on the contrary the British negotiator David Frost would not have brought new solutions, but rather he would have eliminated those put on the table by the May government. Mr Frost would also have downplayed Britain's willingness to cooperate in European security and defence.¹²

Per cui, se il primo ministro Johnson non ottiene un accordo con l'UE entro il 19 ottobre e si conforma al Benn Act, la previsione più plausibile è per il rinvio della Brexit al 31 gennaio 2020.

10 Jean-Charles Larsonneur "Avis fait au nom de la Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées sur le projet de loi de finances pour 2019 (n° 1255) Tome VII, Défense Équipement des Forces – Dissuasion N° 1306" Assemblée Nationale Constitution du 4 Octobre 1958, XV legislature, 12 October 2018. http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/15/budget/plf2019/a1306-tVII.asp#P128_11349, quoted in Claudio Catalano "Il punto sul sistema da combattimento aereo futuro franco-tedesco" Osservatorio Strategico 2019, Anno XXI, no.1, CeMiSS, Roma

11 The "backstop" is a measure devised to assure that the border between British Northern Ireland and the Independent Republic of Ireland (EIRE) will remain open, in accordance with the Belfast agreements of 10 April 1998 which ended the long civil war in Northern Ireland. Non compliance with the agreements could undermine the situation of stability and security that has been created in the last twenty years, thus resuming violent clashes. The "Brexiters" claim that the "backstop" is a way to keep the UK in the single market and therefore in the EU, even after Brexit.

12 Jim Brunsden, Sam Fleming et alii "EU's hopes of momentum on Brexit dashed by Johnson team" The Financial Times, 9 September 2019.

However, the result of the application of the Benn Act could be a continuous postponement of the Brexit date, which would lead to political instability allowing Brexit to continue to dominate the political agenda, to the detriment of other key issues for the country.

The only alternative to this prolonged uncertainty is early general elections, which through the consultation of the electorate and the formation of a new majority would contribute to making a final decision on the ways to obtain Brexit with or without agreement or even its cancellation.

According to some analysts, after the October 19 deadline, early elections would be much more likely, either through Prime Minister Johnson's new motion that would then secure a parliamentary majority or with the fall of the government following a no-confidence motion by the oppositions. In this case, the early elections could take place no earlier than November 2019.¹³

In case of no confidence vote, however, the procedure of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act provides for a two-week period, in which an alternative parliamentary majority can be created in Parliament. Otherwise, the electoral process would be activated.

If Prime Minister Johnson decided to resign, the Fixed Terms Parliaments Act would apply, and opposition parties and conservatives without whip would try to form an alternative government before going to early elections.

According to some, in the case of early elections, Johnson could form a pro-Brexit electoral coalition with Nigel Farage, but this would alienate moderate votes especially in Scotland and London, as well as pushing to the left a Labour coalition government resulting from elections.¹⁴

A conservative's victory, currently favored by the opinion polls, would maintain the current political line bent towards a "no deal" approach; on the contrary, a Labour victory could lead to further postponements of Brexit, and to reconsider some issues under discussion, from permanence in the single market to the backstop. The registration of many young people in the elections could be an indication of a possible victory of the anti-Brexit front.

The result of the elections may not lead to a solid majority, in this case a coalition formed by the current opposition could be formed, with Labour, Lib Dem and SNP that would not reach a unique position regarding Brexit, as their options range from a "soft Brexit" with the permanence in the single market, to a second referendum, to the cancellation of the Brexit with the revocation of the art.50 TEU.

The leader of the Lib Dems, Jo Swinson, at the party's congress in Bournemouth on September 16, said that if the Lib Dems take part to the government they commit themselves to stop and cancel the Brexit by revoking article 50 TEU. In any case, before the elections they will engage with the opposition to request a new referendum and to prevent a Brexit from occurring without an agreement with the EU.

Johnson's actual Brexit policy strategy will be officially announced at his closing speech at the Conservatives Congress in Manchester on October 2, 2019.

13 Charles Cooper "MPs deny Johnson his October Brexit election — again" Politico, 10 settembre 2019 <https://www.politico.eu/article/mps-deny-johnson-his-october-brexit-election-again/>

14 "MPs face last chance to block a no-deal Brexit" the Financial Times, 3 settembre 2019

Serbia's accession to the Eurasian union and its compatibility with the European Union

The EAEU project

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is a commercial project pursued by Moscow with the aim of recreating an area of economic influence in Central Asia, Central Europe and the Caucasus. It was launched in 2014 with a liberalization of trade between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. In 2015, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia joined it. With the exception of Belarus, no Eastern European country is part of it and, at the moment, Serbia is the only candidate country for EU membership that is negotiating accession to the EAEU. The project has been seen by many as a Russian alternative to the European Union. In reality it is predominantly a project of Eurasian economic regionalism supported by Moscow, but which cannot be seen or compared as an alternative to joining the European Union. The importance and values of the two markets, the technological level of assets, the legal and regulatory mechanisms of operation and the overall political meaning are indeed profoundly different and are substantially impossible to compare. Also because the European Union is not just an area of free trade, but an extremely complex and integrated project of convergence of the countries of the European area along numerous axes of collaboration. The geographic proximity ranks them differently, with Serbia now neighboring four land borders with the countries of the European Union (Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria); the other bordering countries are all candidate countries applying to accession. On the contrary, over 1000 kilometers separate the borders of Serbia and Belarus and over 2000 are those between Serbia and Armenia, the two closest EAEU, member states. The fact that Serbia is mostly belonging to the European more than to the Eurasian economic space is clearly visible in Serbia's foreign trade data. Trade between Serbia and the European Union reached almost 30 billion dollars in 2018 while that with the EAEU remains less than 6 billion, of which the vast majority of it, 90%, is with Russia alone; for the moment, the volumes of Serbian trade with the other EAEU countries is insignificant. Serbia has greatly benefited from the liberalization of relations with the European Union that has progressively occurred, having seen the value of exports from Serbia to Europe, from 3 billion dollars in 2008 to 10 of the 2018. This is partly also due to the capital investments that have moved from Europe to Serbia, and that have reached a cumulative value in the last decade at around 13 billion dollars.

Serbia's accession to the EAEU

Serbia has recently started negotiations with the EAEU for its accession some time ago, but some tariff problems linked to the export of Serbian products have delayed its conclusion. It now seems that the trade ministers of the EAEU countries have substantially accepted the Serbian demands and therefore the free trade pact between Belgrade and the other countries of this customs union will be signed. The signing of these agreements will take place before the end of 2019, according to Russian sources. The EAEU Commission estimates that the benefit to Belgrade could lead to an increase in its export of more than \$ 1 billion per year. The signing of these agreements is perfectly in the faculties of Belgrade, which already has a free trade agreement with Russia alone. Obviously, when Serbia enters the European Union these, as well as other agreements, will have to be revised or abolished, as the Union envisages the existence of a single European market with a single external customs area. It is important to consider that the existence of a single European customs area is not only a factor promoting intra-European trade, but also it is a fundamental step for the construction of an instrument of power and economic influence on

which the European Union is particularly reliant, especially for avoiding the use or more effective tools of state-power. One example of the over-reliance that EU is putting on economic union is the use of economic sanctions that the European Union applies against non-European states for political and security reasons, and in particular those to Russia. The European Union applies them with Council decisions renewed every six months, and all member states must comply with them. The sanctioning policy of the European Union is not limited to the member countries but a compliance to its rules is also "requested" to the accession countries, as a political condition for facilitating dialogue. Serbia has always refused to comply with European sanctions against Russia, preferring to maintain the privileged commercial relationship with Moscow. Differently of what has been done by neighboring Montenegro, which has decided - even though it was not obliged to do so - to translate the EU sanctions into its legal system, exposing itself to Russian retaliatory actions.

European reactions to a possible accession of Serbia to the EAEU

The announcement of the closure of Serbia's negotiations with the EAEU and the possibility of an imminent signing of the agreement has aroused criticism and political pressure from Brussels. The EU Commission has made it known that the agreement is incompatible with accession to the European Union and that therefore this goal cannot be achieved until Serbia has in force preferential trade agreements with countries outside the Union. The European position was politically strengthened by Mirsoslav Lajčák, currently Slovakia's Foreign Minister. Lajčák, a career diplomat, has not only served Slovak diplomacy but has played several important roles in the international community. He is a profound connoisseur of the Balkans and has also served in the past as High Representative of the International Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He can be considered a key figure of high level in European diplomacy in different situations of mediation of the Balkan crises, whose positions often reflect the line that the EU intends to follow in the Balkans. Particularly significant was also the fact that it was precisely Lajčák who organized and negotiated in 2006 the referendum for the independence of Kosovo from Montenegro. The message that Lajčák transferred to Serbia after the meeting of European Union Foreign Affairs Ministers was a warning: Belgrade must not keep its feet in two shoes and must be extremely clear on the geopolitical route it intends to follow. And, according to him, strengthening relations with the EuroAsian Union would not go in the right direction.

Analysis, evaluations and forecasts

The particular climate of latent tension that exists in the Western Balkans area and the unresolved issue with Russia after the Ukrainian crisis lead the European Union to be particularly reactive and sensitive towards all the political initiatives not in line with the European integration project in the Western Balkans. However, the announced signing of Serbia's entry into the Euro-Asian free trade area must not give rise to particular concerns, especially in the context of the already complex Serbia - Europe relations, in which there are other dossiers to worry, starting with that of Kosovo or other complex points of the negotiation for all 28 accession chapters. Serbia's accession to the EAU won't produce new commercial relations with Russia and Belarus, with whose countries Belgrade has already liberalized 99% of trade relations. The only non-European commercial effects of accession will be to partially open the markets of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan for certain quotas of Serbian products (mostly dairy products and spirits). This will be a very negligible commercial effect that will bring even more negligible political effects. We do not therefore see the real reason why the European Union should send negative signs to Serbia at this point. It is true that Belgrade has promised the European Union to cancel all its commercial free trade agreements when Serbia should join the Union. But a certain date for this entry has not yet been negotiated

and - even the most optimistic forecasts – it is not likely before 2025. And this date may be likely as long as the Kosovo dossier, which in the past few months has worsened, will be resumed and it will produce a sustainable agreement both in Pristina and in Belgrade. The uncertainty of the Kosovar dossier and the same uncertainty about the European Union's readiness to proceed with a further enlargement are all good arguments for Belgrade that strengthens its belief that in the meantime of the EU vacuum it can proceed to strengthen its free trade agreements with non-European countries.

The European Union also stressed that it is important that in the free trade agreements that Serbia signs a specific exit-clause should be provided. However, this request from the European Union appears to be superfluous since article 118 of the Astana Treaty (that regulates the Euro-Asian Economic Union), provides, pursuant to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, the right of each Member State to withdraw from the Treaty, by expressing its decision through the diplomatic channels. It is so possible with a written diplomatic note 12 months before the date of the intended exit from the Union. In other words, 12 months before the presumed date of accession to the European Union, Serbia will be able to exercise its envisaged right of withdrawal, thus perfectly returning to the conditions required by the European Union.

However, taking notes of the concerns expressed by the European Union on this topic we can try to give some interpretations.

The first one is political. By signing the EAEU treaty, the Serbian government gives its population an incorrect view of the long-term sustainability of its neutrality policy, continuing to believe that it is possible to maintain an economic and strategic equidistance between Europe and Russia. If this is possible in the short term, in the long term both positions are not sustainable, as demonstrated also in the case of the Ukrainian crisis. Serbia neutrality position is tempered by the fact that Russia has never indicated its intention to oppose Serbia's EU accession process. But the unresolved Ukrainian crisis, European sanctions and Russian counter-sanctions have deteriorated the situation. The EAEU was born in 2014 and therefore brings with it the problems of the geopolitical deterioration of relations between Europe and Russia. The European Union, in addition, wants to send a signal of firmness to Moscow as well, using Belgrade position as a tactic point.

The second interpretation of the concerns of the European Union is perhaps linked to the issue of sanctions. The Treaty of the Eurasian Union requires that the members of the Union commit themselves politically to the achievement of the objectives of creating the Customs Union, removing the obstacles to its realization. It is clear that accession to the Treaty would make it impossible for Serbia to adopt trade restrictions or other types of sanctions against Russia. Also because the treaty itself provides that the contracting parties refrain from measures that could damage the creation of the Eurasian free trade area. It is therefore clear that there is no compatibility between joining the EAEU and the requests of the European Union to adhere to the Union's sanctioning policies. Adherence to the EAEU Treaty would therefore imply that even when a new Serbian government should eventually accept the policy of harmonizing sanctions, the legal obligations deriving from the Eurasian Free Trade Area would prevent its adoption, and it would be necessary the denunciation of the Treaty even before the EU accession;

Then there is the economic effect of the Treaty itself. An effect that perhaps will be minimal compared to the volume of traffic with the EU, but that for a small economy like that of Serbia could be not entirely negligible. Also because it adds to the already existing volumes and it is not expected that joining the EAEU will entail having to renounce export quotas towards the EU.

If these are, in our opinion, the three main concerns on the European side, we have to have a look also on the motivations on Serbia side, which is nonetheless engaged in a difficult process of accession to Europe as main economic priority. Certainly the need to balance the EU line with a Russian line has always been a constant of Serbian governments, both for political reasons and for internal security needs. But it could also be due to the fact that Belgrade has begun to prepare for the negotiations mediated by the European Union on the future of Kosovo. Membership of the Eurasian Union could therefore be read in terms of increasing its negotiating weight vis-à-vis the EU, and balancing possible concessions that the Serbian government could be called upon to make in order to overcome the deadlock on Kosovo. Or indeed, it could be a signal that Belgrade is not willing to deal with the EU on the state of Kosovo and therefore in the case of an obligatory conditionality of the two dossiers Serbia wants to prove that it has a plan B ready. We do not know which of these hypotheses are correct. But there seem to be sufficient elements to believe that, at least for the timing, the two files are linked. In September the US appointed Matthew Palmer as special envoy for the Balkans and its main mission will be to find a compromise between Belgrade and Pristina on the status of Kosovo. In this way, the US proves to have taken over the Balkan dossier and, at the beginning of next year, it is possible to expect some acceleration of the situation. The acceleration of Serbia's accession to the EAEU could therefore be read in this perspective. His first move was to visit the region and ask the Kosovar authorities to remove customs duties on Belgrade goods to allow the two sides to resume negotiations next year. The US intention to proceed with the Serbian-Kosovar dossier was evident in August when US Secretary of State Pompeo requested a meeting with Serbian President Vucic in parallel with a UN meeting in New York.

Political instability in Algeria: opposition and repression

Algeria. On 17 September, thousands of students protested in the streets of Algiers. The request is the cancellation of the December elections because "undemocratic and influenced by the military and politicians compromised with the regime".

The protesters, who have been protesting for six months, want real political reform and the removal of the loyalists of the former president. The month of September closes with the thirty-third consecutive week of street protests in Algiers.

Protest demonstrations have been banned by the Algerian law since 2011, but this ban was ignored following the first demonstration, on 22 February - following the announcement of the candidacy of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, sick and incapable of governing the country. However, the government's reaction now tends to contain public protest demonstrations: access to the Algiers capital to protesters has been so banned.

On the one hand, the government has tried to implement a reformist policy with a generational change of political and military leaders. A change characterized by arrests for corruption and exemplary sentences against senior institutional and Bouteflika family leaders: among the most important, the brother of the former president, Said Bouteflika, the two former heads of intelligence, the generals Bachir Tartaq and Mohamed Mediene, and the head of the Workers' Party, Louisa Hanoun, were sentenced to 15 years in prison for "conspiracy against the state" in September, on the other hand, the Algerian government strongly intensified police activities during the demonstrations and arrested several prominent activists before the Friday protests in September. This approach is confirmed by the head of the Algerian army and deputy defense minister, General Ahmed Gaid Saleh.¹

Gaid Saleh, who imposed himself as an authority in this power vacuum, referred to a plot in his public speech of 12 September, making explicit reference to foreign influence in fueling street demonstrations. Gaed Saleh played a key role in removing Bouteflika, imposing his resignation and arresting some of his closest political allies and collaborators; but many Algerians believe that the ultimate goal of Saleh's army is to keep the system alive, albeit in another guise. A strong and growing role, combined with a past in the Bouteflika regime, which prompted tens of thousands of Algerians to protest on September 20 to demand the cancellation of the elections and the dismissal of Saleh.²

General Saleh's reaction was immediate: the elections are confirmed in December, in order to elect a legitimate president of the republic who will govern and respond to the needs of the people, including the demands of the protesters. The government is increasingly weak and shows condescension towards its opponents: it was announced, "The elections will be held in a different way from the previous ones, widely seen as mere electoral exercises aimed at strengthening the power of Bouteflika". For the first time - said Saleh - "the government will no longer have control over the electoral process". To confirm this, the independent electoral authority will replace the interior ministry, historically responsible for the elections.³

1 Al-Jazeera, 26 settembre 2019, in <https://bit.ly/2omYCOe>

2 *Thousands march in Algeria in first protest since election call*, Al-Jazeera, 20 settembre 2019, in <https://bit.ly/2p1m4QS>.

3 Reuters, September 24, 2019, in <https://bit.ly/30Xzlr4>.

Who will succeed to Bouteflika?

At the end of September, the independent national election authority announced that there would be 73 politicians ready to submit their applications⁴.

The presidential elections in Algeria, scheduled for December 12, will be a tough competition among candidates who were close to former President Bouteflika and had important roles under his regime. If the authorities succeed in guaranteeing the elections as planned, the leaders of the opposition party will be absent for the first time since the 1995 elections, when for the first time more candidates were admitted. Due to the large number of candidates loyal to the former president, the scenario is described by many observers as a path towards a "fifth mandate without Bouteflika"⁵.

Among the candidates is one of the most important members of the Bouteflika regime: former Prime Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune⁶, 72, a key supporter of President Bouteflika and twice appointed as Minister of Housing and Urban Development. Tebboune is linked to the "Khalifa scandal" in 2003, which takes its name from the businessperson Abdelmoumen Khalifa detained because he was accused of corruption; his son, Khaled, has been in prison for 18 months for his involvement in a real estate corruption case. Abdallah Baali, former ambassador of Algeria in the United States, would be responsible for his election campaign. Tebboune is indicated as a candidate supported by the army: hypothesis denied by Baali and by the army chief of staff, General Ahmed Gaed Saleh.

The former minister of the national community abroad, Belkacem Sahli, 48, is another candidate. Sahli, supporter of a fifth term for Bouteflika, is the head of a small party, the Republican National Alliance.

Analysis, assessments and forecasts

The Algerian army is deeply rooted in national political management: it has been managing national politics for over 20 years and does not intend to give up the leading role that it has consolidated in twenty years of the regime.

Exemplary convictions and arrests of former senior officials and politicians (intelligence chiefs and former President Bouteflika's brother) make them "scapegoats" in order to appease popular anger. The protest movements try to undermine the role of the military, but the so-called Deep State (based on collusion and patronage of the Armed Forces within the political system) would remain extremely strong, despite requests for change by the Algerians: politicians are expendable in order to guarantee the military institution that manages Algeria to survive the political and social turbulence unscathed..⁷

This is the goal of popular protests: the destruction of a system in which the armed forces are the limit to the construction of democracy. In fact the Armed Forces are in the front line to contain a protest that could involve the lower military ranks; in this way the institution would be affected from within. This is a scenario that Saleh, and all the military and governmental groups, would try to avoid at all costs, even at the price of a very violent repression.

Main events in the Maghreb and Mashreq area:

- **Algeria.** Algeria and ExxonMobil, a U.S. energy giant, signed an agreement to study the hydrocarbon potential in the North African nation's Sahara desert, the official APS news agency reported on Monday. According to Algeria's National Agency for the Evaluation of Hydrocarbon

4 Amnesty International, in <https://bit.ly/2ocQrDv>.

5 AAWSat, October, 1st 2019, in <https://bit.ly/2LS018q>.

6 AAWSat, September 27, 2019, in <https://bit.ly/2VkzmEi>

7 Voa News, September 25, 2019, in <https://bit.ly/2lvQVwa>.

Resources (ALNAFT), ExxonMobil showed interest in the Algerian hydrocarbon-mining sector, which has significant hydrocarbon resources. The signing of the agreement, part of ALNAFT's mission to promote and develop the hydrocarbon mining, makes ExxonMobil the fourth multinational company to join the agency in this study, after Italy's ENI, France's Total and Norway's Equinor. ALNAFT considers this commitment as "the first step of ExxonMobil in Algeria for the prospection of opportunity in hydrocarbon research and exploitation." According to an earlier statement by the government on Jan. 28, 2019, Algeria's reserves of unconventional energy make it the third in the world in shale gas and seventh in shale oil.⁸ The signing of the agreement, part of ALNAFT's mission to promote and develop hydrocarbon extraction, makes ExxonMobil the fourth multinational company to join the agency in this study, after the Italian ENI, Total French and Norwegian Equinor.

- **Egypt.** Egypt: More than 1,100 protesters arrested after demonstration. Egyptian authorities have arrested more than 1,100 people, including several high-profile individuals, after rare protests were held in several cities calling on President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to quit. Those reported arrested include one of Egypt's most prominent opposition figures, a former spokesperson for a candidate in last year's presidential election, and a renowned writer, human rights monitors said. Defying a ban on protesting without a permit, thousands took to the streets in the capital Cairo and other cities on Friday in response to calls for demonstrations against alleged government corruption. The protests continued in the Red Sea city of Suez.⁹
- **Israel.** Israeli elections: Netanyahu and Gantz both promise to form the next government: Gantz suggested he wanted to consider a national unity government.
- **Lybia.** A US air strike in southwestern Libya killed 17 people, allegedly affiliated with the so-called Islamic state: the third attack against jihadist militants was carried out on September 26 by the US command of Africa (AFRICOM), in collaboration with the government of national agreement (GNA). The US attacks in Libya in September are the first of the last year. Reports the Associated Press (AP) that, according to official US sources, Washington will continue to target the Islamic State-Libya and other terrorist groups in the region, in order to prevent the creation of safe areas for terrorism.
- **Tunisia.** Presidential elections in Tunisia: two candidates, and one was in prison until three days before the elections. In the first round of presidential voting last month, all the major-party candidates were knocked out, leaving two contenders: Kais Saied, a previously obscure law professor who claimed 18.4 percent of the vote as an anticorruption independent, and Nabil Karoui, a businessman and co-owner of a popular TV network, who won 15.6 percent. Mr. Karoui has support mainly among poorer people with whom he has built a relationship through his Nessma TV network and a philanthropic organization, Khalil Tounes. Mr. Saied, his law-professor opponent, ran a campaign with almost no advertising, relying on an image of integrity and the votes of young people disillusioned with the political system. The men's success threatens to shatter Tunisia's consensus governing model since 2011, in which conservatives and modernists have shared power.¹⁰

8 Xinhua, October 1st 2019.

9 Al-Jazeera, September 25, 2019, in <https://bit.ly/2nwtXNH>.

10 Blaise L., *The New York Times*, 6 ottobre 2019, in <https://nyti.ms/2OpKuOG>.

► Last year illicit drug use in sub-Saharan Africa affected as much as 1.6 per cent of the adult population, while by 2050 the number of drug addicts is expected to increase by around 14 million, in addition to the current almost 10 million. These are the highlights of what has become one of the major emergencies of the macro-region, where narcotics trafficking is on the rise, although reliable data are lacking.

Evolution and trends in drug trafficking and consumption in sub-Saharan Africa

At the end of 2018, during a hearing at the Security Council, Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC), raised the alarm over the increase in the drug trafficking in West and Central Africa. The czar of the UN Anti-Drug Agency drew attention to the consequent risks of destabilizing the governments of the two regions, as well as for security, economic growth and public health¹.

Mr. Yuri Fedotov also recalled how African criminal networks have expanded the transport of cocaine and heroin from Africa to Europe. A trend confirmed by the UNODC's 2018 report, which shows that in Africa was recorded the largest increase in cocaine seizures². While in several sub-Saharan airports has been registered an increase of the heroin bust, especially in the Lagos Murtala Muhammed Airport, Accra Kotoka Airport and Cotonou Cadjehoun Airport. In the same period, has been intensified controls in Bamako, Lomé and Ouagadougou Airports.

The UNODC study also confirms the strong increase in pharmaceutical opioid sequestration in recent years. A trend acclaimed by the fact that globally 87 per cent of the synthetic opiates intercepted last year come from Western, Central and Northern Africa. A worrying state largely due to the considerable increase in the use of tramadol, an opioid analgesic widely consumed outside of specific therapeutic purposes in the three African regions.

During the same period, methamphetamine seizures also reached almost the same level as those of cocaine, especially at the Lagos and Cotonou airports. In the fight against methamphetamine trafficking is very active the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria's federal anti-drug agency that last December discovered a methamphetamine-producing laboratory into Obinugwu village in the southeast region³. Inside the site, there were 78 kilograms of Crystal meth, a powerful derivative of alkaloids of vegetable origin that creates an immediate dependence. Most likely, the huge amount worth tens of thousands of dollars seized in the Obinugwu laboratory was not destined for domestic consumption, but for the South African and Asian markets.

The laboratories, such as the one found by NDLEA in Obinugwu village, are often realized with the help of Mexican drug cartel chemists to allow mass production of methamphetamine. A very profitable business for the "cult", like are called the Nigerian gangs. The data are also very eloquent because since the first meth production laboratory was discovered in Nigeria in 2011, the authorities have detected that the amount of stimulants placed on the market has increased by 14 times. While the seizures of methamphetamine went from 390 pounds in 2012 to 3,004 pounds in 2016⁴.

1 www.voanews.com/africa/un-reports-alarming-trends-drug-trafficking-africa

2 www.unodc.org/wdr2018/prelaunch/WDR18_Booklet_3_DRUG_MARKETS.pdf

3 www.news24.com/Africa/News/breaking-bad-nigeria-fear-of-a-new-narco-state-20181220

4 *Ibidem*

Alarming consumption forecasts

In confirmation of the ongoing emergency, there are the results of a new study of the ENACT project (Enhancing Africa's ability to Counter Transnational Crime)⁵. According to the research, in 2018 illicit drug use in sub-Saharan Africa affected 1.6 per cent of the adult population. A higher level than in the MENA area, Latin America and the Caribbean and the South Asia, but smaller compared to 1.8 per cent in Europe and Central Asia⁶.

Even more alarming is the forecast of the number of drug addicts in sub-Saharan Africa, which is expected to increase by around 14 million by 2050, in addition to the current 10 million. An increase corresponding to almost 150 per cent more than at present, but which could be resized by the fact that it is equivalent to an overall growth of 5 per cent of the population of the macro-region that uses drugs.

A modest percentage compared to 14 per cent in Europe and Central Asia, 18 per cent in the MENA area and 23 per cent in the Latin America and Caribbean macro-region. However, even if the 5 per cent increase may seem rather limited, the rapid growth of the sub-Saharan population expected between 2018 and 2050 must be taken into consideration. The expected doubling of the inhabitants, stated in the report, indicates that in the medium-long term, sub-Saharan Africa will register the most substantial increase in the absolute number of habitual drug users compared to any other part of the world.

According to the researchers of the ENACT program, the population of sub-Saharan Africa is composed largely of young people, is increasingly affluent and in rapid urbanization. Three factors that increase the likelihood that a person decides to use psychotropic substances. A decision that according to the World Health Organization (WHO) can also be influenced by the high levels of poverty and social inequality affecting the region⁷.

It is also expected that West Africa, which now has nearly six million habitual consumers, will be particularly affected by the rapid increase in drug addicts, which are estimated to exceed 13 million by 2050. However, the percentage will remain relatively constant in proportion to the total of drug users in Africa.

The grey area of Sahel

The Sahel, in addition to being one of the most unstable sub-Saharan Africa areas, is among the most affected by the increase in drug trafficking and consumption too. Often considered a twilight zone due to its porous borders and lack of government control in many of the remote areas, the Sahel has become a crossroads for the illegal trade in cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamine. A region where criminal groups and drug trafficking networks have wide scope for action⁸. In the vast area, drug trafficking is also largely facilitated by transnational tribal links and the field-proven routes that cross the desert⁹.

In a recent study, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has established that the vast flows of money resulting from illegal activities in West Africa strongly undermine the ability of states in the region to govern effectively¹⁰.

5 Z. Donnerfeld, J. Bello-Schünemann, L. Welborn, *Drug demand and use in Africa. Modelling trends to 2050*, Enact Research Paper n. 09, August 2019. <https://enact-africa.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/2019-08-28-drug-demand-and-use-in-africa-reaseach-paper-cb.pdf>

6 The result was strongly influenced by the inclusion of new data related to Nigeria extrapolated from the UNODC *Drug use report in Nigeria 2018*. www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Drugs/Drug_Use_Survey_Nigeria_2019_BOOK.pdf

7 www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/82/9/editorial20904html/en/

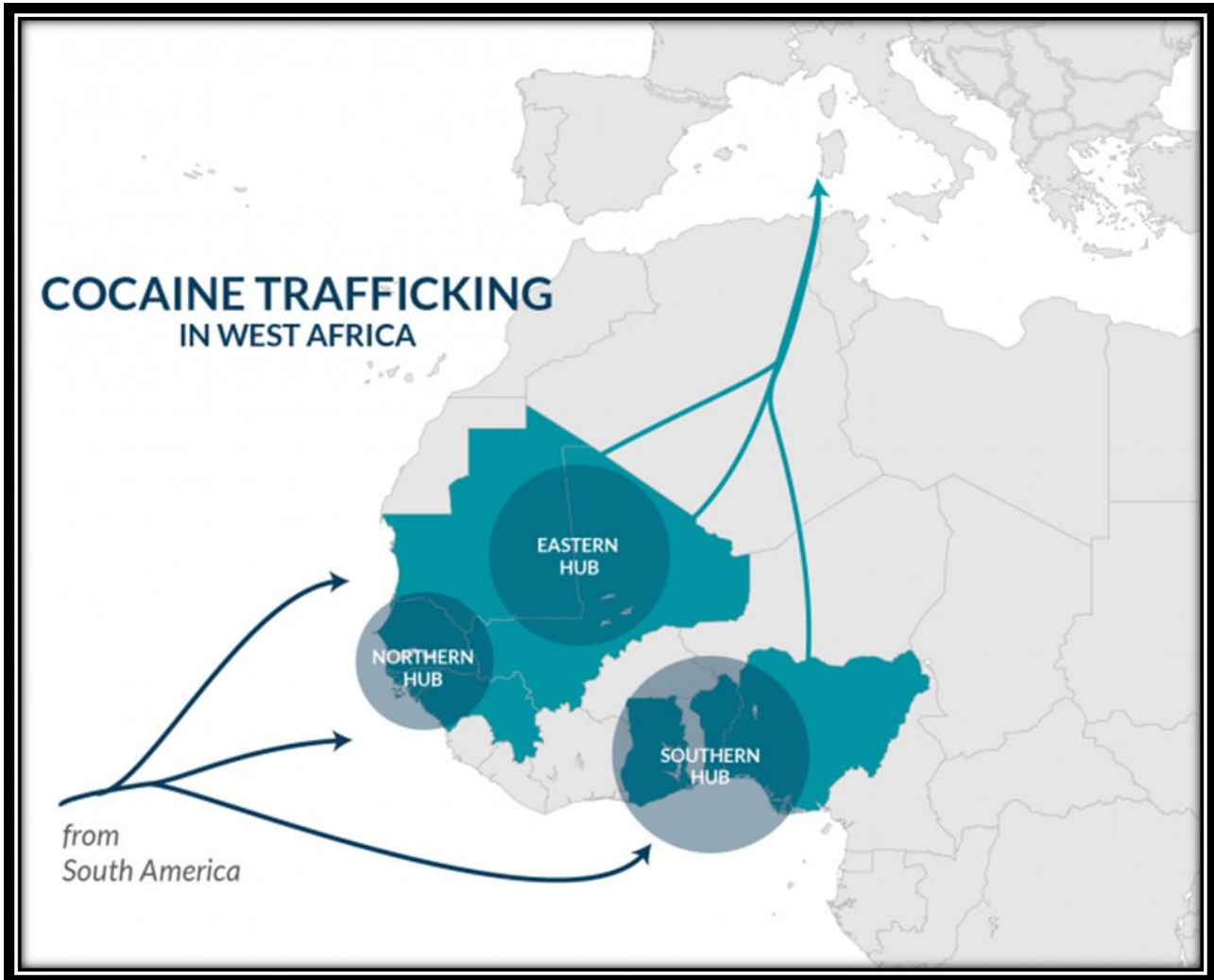
8 J. Eligh, *The evolution of illicit drug markets and drug policy in Africa*, Enact Continental Report 03, June 2019. doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.15039.87201

9 <https://jasoninstitute.com/2019/04/21/drug-trafficking-in-the-sahel/>

10 OECD, *Illicit Financial Flows: The Economy of Illicit Trade in West Africa*, OECD Report, Paris, 2018. doi.org/10.1787/9789264268418-en

While a study by the Carnegie Endowment in Washington found that cannabis produced in Morocco is one of the most smuggled drugs through the Sahel¹¹.

Cocaine trafficking is also widespread in the region, using other routes, which from the coasts reach the cities of northern Mali such as Gao or Timbuktu, or pass through Agadez, the third most populated city in Niger at the gateway to the Sahara, which has become a crossroads human trafficking. From these destinations, the drug arrives in North Africa and heads towards Europe. However, the exact extent of cocaine trafficking in the region is unknown, with estimates ranging from 50 to 200 tons per year¹².



However, we know the date that establishes the official entry of the Sahel into drug trafficking routes: 2 November 2009, when the charred fuselage of an old Boeing 727-200 was found in the middle of the desert near the town of Tarkint, in the northeast of Mali. According to local police, the plane carrying ten tons of pure cocaine came from Venezuela and was set on fire by traffickers after drug dumping¹³.

After the discovery of the aircraft, investigators from the Malian Police Anti-Drug Department arrested five suspects. The Malian travel agent Mohamed Hacko, the French pilot Eric Vernay, already suspected of being involved in various drug trafficking, the Venezuelan Gustavo Valencia,

11 https://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel_sahara.pdf

12 Cit., <https://jasoninstitute.com/2019/04/21/drug-trafficking-in-the-sahel/>

13 C. Hawley, *South American gangs flying vast quantities of cocaine to Europe*, in «The Guardian», 15 November 2010. <https://bit.ly/2kB4uRV>

the Portuguese Souza Miranda and former policeman Spanish Miguel Angel Devesa, who had settled in Mali after being expelled from the body¹⁴. Malian investigators subsequently cleared the five men¹⁵. However, the fact remains that at the time Devesa, who was already in Bamako prison for the murder of Colombian Juan Carlos "Johnny" García Soto, was considered one of the drug lords in West Africa¹⁶.

Mali, new hub of cocaine trafficking in the Sahel

A recent report by the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria (ISS) states that today Mali is one of the main transit points in the region for cocaine from South America¹⁷. The fact that the number of seizures at Bamako airport has decreased since 2008 shows the commitment of the Malian authorities to cope with the phenomenon. An important result obtained, also thanks to an increased international aid, which has made it possible to improve surveillance at the main Malian airport. However, it seems equally plausible that in the face of stricter controls the traffickers have taken countermeasures by strengthening the transport of drugs on the road.

Proof of this is the fact that in recent year several cocaine seizures have been carried out on the roads that connect Conakry, the capital of Guinea, to Bamako. Add to this, the limited resources of the security services and the porous borders of the country seem to hypothecate Mali to remain a crossroads for cocaine trafficking in West Africa.

It is also important to highlight what is reported by the International Crisis Group (ICG), according to which the proceeds of illicit drug trafficking are often used by traffickers to provide local people in the north of Mali with primary services, which the central government often fails to insure¹⁸. A prerogative that effectively transforms these criminal groups into an alternative governing authority, increasing their legitimacy in the territories in which they operate and facilitating their illegal trafficking¹⁹.

The links between the drug cartels and the jihadist groups

In June 2010, a UNODC study on the globalization of crime was among the first to denounce the collaboration between drug traffickers and jihadists²⁰. A collaboration, which was fuelling Islamist terrorism. Six months later, an article published on "Telegraph" reported that the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) had made an agreement with al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to secure the safe passage of cocaine through the Sahel²¹.

The union between jihadists and drug traffickers has been the subject of various analyses, some of which have revealed the existence of a strong link between terrorist groups active in the Sahel region. In particular, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and criminal organizations addicted to drug trafficking.

14 www.periodistadigital.com/mundo/africa/20110626/jefe-boeing-727-air-cocaine-ex-policia-espanol-noticia-689400806425/

15 www.expatica.com/es/mali-drug-plane-suspects-freed/

16 <https://blogs.20minutos.es/enguerra/2012/06/11/miguel-angel-devesa-el-gallego-que-dominaba-del-trafico-de-cocaina-en-africa/>

17 W. Assanvo, *Mali's drug problems are its silent enemy*, ISS Report, 15 May 2018. <https://bit.ly/2kAMIUI>

18 International Crisis Group, Africa Report n. 267, *Drug Trafficking, Violence and Politics in Northern Mali*, 13 December 2018. <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/267-drug-trafficking-violence-and-politics-in-northern-mali-english.pdf>

19 *Ibidem*

20 www.unodc.org/documents/lpo-brazil/noticias/2010/06/TOCTA_Report_2010_low_res.pdf

21 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/colombia/8230134/South-American-drug-gangs-funding-al-Qaeda-terrorists.html

In one of the most recent studies, carried out by the Washington-based Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD), emerges the important financial contribution to AQIM from drug trafficking²². Although in the report, it is clearly specified that the extremist group taxes drug routes, guaranteeing safety during the passage of traffickers, but is not involved in the drug dealing activities²³.

However, other accredited studies argue instead that local terrorist groups have acquired most of their revenue from ransoms, obtained from the seizures of tourists and humanitarian workers. This is explained in detail by a recent research of the MENARA project. The study highlighted that the links between the radical armed organizations and the drug trafficking cartels are not as solid and articulated as they were claimed in the past²⁴.

In the jihad context, the use of money from drug trafficking has been the subject of many debates within radical Islamic groups, which on the basis of religious dogmas have always officially denied any involvement in such criminal activity. The proceeds derived from drugs trafficking have generated much controversy within the same jihadist organizations, which have established stronger ties with oil and weapons traffickers²⁵.

For example, the decision to be involved in drug trafficking was not welcomed by all AQIM cell leaders in the Sahel, nor by the militia themselves. While the brigade led by the most wanted Algerian terrorist Mokhtar Belmokhtar was engaged in trafficking in drugs and human beings, the one led by Abdelhamid Abu Zeid systematically condemned this practice, causing serious tensions within the organization²⁶.



22 https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/CSIF_TFBB_AQIM.pdf

23 Ibidem

24 D. Lounnas, *The links between jihadi organizations and illegal trafficking in the Sahel*, MENARA Working Papers, n. 25, November 2018. www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara_wp_25.pdf

25 Ibidem

26 D. Lounnas, *Al Qaida au Maghreb Islamique et le trafic de drogue au Sahel*, in *Maghreb-Machrek*, vol. 216, n. 2, 2013. doi:10.3917/machr.216.0109

Furthermore, would also be directly involved in drug trafficking some leaders of the Movement for the uniqueness of Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), which in October 2011 had split from AQIM and in August 2013 merged into al-Murabitoun together with the al-Mulathameen brigade led by Belmokhtar²⁷.

Undoubtedly, establishing close relationships with local criminal networks was of fundamental importance to jihadist organizations when they started to settle in the Sahel. This has fostered the strengthening of their presence and generated additional sources of revenue to finance the jihad, but their main resource has been the kidnappings that have shaken the region in recent years. Currently there are still Western hostages in the hands of the GSIM, but many nations, conforming to the dictates of UN Security Council resolution 2133, have refused to pay the ransoms in an attempt to stem the phenomenon²⁸.

Ultimately, the main sources of revenue for radical organizations do not come from drugs, but are represented by money left over from the release of hostages in past years, from taxes coerced from local populations and donations from their supporters.

Analysis, assessments and forecasts

One of the most critical issues to face in order to cope with the expansion of drug use in sub-Saharan Africa is the lack of information from governments in the region, which does not allow us to draw up very reliable statistics to monitor the phenomenon. In 2017, only 31 per cent of African states reported their data to the UNODC, compared to 67 per cent of Asian countries²⁹.

The scarce collaboration of such a large number of States in providing information on seizures operated by the Offices dealing with drug trafficking does not allow us to determine the real flow of narcotics that passes through Africa. It also has implications for the measures taken by the various countries to stem the spread of crimes associated with drug trafficking, infectious diseases related to drug use by injection, increased mortality rates and other negative consequences for social-economic tissue.

The information gap should be quickly filled also to help the police force curb the flow of drugs across international borders, and allow health workers to better understand the extent of the phenomenon. All this will not only help to carry out the research effort, but also to better understand the links between drug use and organized crime.

It is also important to consider, that in most sub-Saharan countries the answer to the problem is dominated by a repressive approach and despite efforts to prevent consumption, much remains to be done in this area. The same applies to assistance to drug addicts and habitual consumers, limited by the lack of adequate institutions and resources.

To curb drug trafficking in the macro area it would also be necessary to strengthen regional cooperation, which has so far proved to be rather weak. Furthermore, surveillance and controls at border posts should also be intensified, including through a more structured intelligence activity, necessary to identify and dismantle traffic networks and production areas. These efforts are necessary to ensure that the harmful consequences of drugs are minimized in an area, which in addition to serious economic difficulties is already facing many problems of stability and security.

27 www.unodc.org/wdr2017/field/Booklet_5_NEXUS.pdf

28 [www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2133\(2014\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2133(2014))

29 wdr.unodc.org/wdr2019/prelaunch/WDR-2019-Methodology-FINAL.pdf

Where is Afghanistan going? The negotiations, the elections, the costs of the conflict

The almost-agreement with the Taliban

At the beginning of September, the agreement between the Taliban and Washington (discussed in Doha, Qatar, where the Taliban since 2013 have a representative office, but the talks began in 2007), after long and arduous negotiations conducted by the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalizad, seemed to have been reached. It envisaged "in principle" the withdrawal within 135 days¹ since the signing of the agreement of 5,400 US soldiers out of 14,000 present (the current agreement with the government allows a presence until 2024). In return, the Taliban, led by Abdul Ghani Baradar, were ready for a public declaration not to grant their territory to terrorist groups for international attacks, in this case the Islamic State Khorasan, the Afghan group affiliated to the self-styled Islamic State (about 5,000 men)².

Officially, following the September 5th attack, President Trump did not want to proceed, but there were already many doubts about the agreement between the parties³. The invitation planned for the Taliban - and President Ghani - for a meeting at Camp David has been withdrawn. More likely, the plans for the meeting never really came about because the Taliban leaders were ready to visit the United States only after the negotiated agreement had been signed and announced.

In recent months, however, other attacks had been conducted, and never interrupted, in the capital⁴ as well as in the provinces of Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar, Badhakshan, Blak, Farah and Herat, making it clear who had effective control of the territory (about half of the country).

The agreement between the two parties had been reached - due to pressing US electoral needs - after nine rounds of meetings, with total exclusion of the Afghan government.

Seddiq Sediqui, President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman, always expressed concern about an agreement from which Kabul has been cut off: the Afghan government is not considered an interlocutor by the Taliban but a Washington "puppet". It was expected that, after the agreement with Washington, intra-Afghan negotiations would be undertaken⁵.

On September 9th, President Trump declared the negotiations dead, but the National Security Advisor Bolton, a staunch opponent of the Agreement, is no longer in his place and the Afghan war has reached unsustainable human and economic costs for a second presidential term⁶.

The point, therefore, is not whether the US will return to the negotiation table, but when. Senior Taliban negotiator Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanekzai confirmed that the negotiations are the only way to pacify the country⁷. Former President Karzai said it would be better to have an agreement with the Taliban before going to the polls.

1 Independent, 03/09/2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/kabul-afghanistan-explosion-attack-dead-latest-us-troops-withdrawal-a9089406.html>; NYT 03/09/2019; <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/03/world/asia/kabul-bombing-afghanistan.html>; BBC 03/09/2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49559493>

2 "Kabul bombing shows frailty of security", The National, August 18, 2019; <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/editorial/kabul-bombing-shows-frailty-of-security-1.899799>.

3 J. Walsh, "A Deal With the Taliban Is Only the First Step Toward Peace", September 5, 2019; <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2019-09-05/deal-taliban-only-first-step-toward-peace>.

4 B. Rubin, "Diplomacy Can't Solve All of Afghanistan's Problems", Foreign Affairs, August 26, 2019; <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2019-08-26/diplomacy-cant-solve-all-afghanistans-problems>.

5 "Behind Trump's Taliban Debacle", International Crisis Group, 10 September 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/behind-trumps-taliban-debacle>.

6 DOD, "Cost of War Report", March 2019: l'ammontare totale di spese per l'Afghanistan ha raggiunto 755, 7 miliardi di dollari.

7 "Afghanistan war: Taliban tell Trump their 'doors are open'", BBC, 18 September 2019; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49729612>.

The interests of the parties were entirely convergent⁸: the troops withdrawal from Afghan territory. The disagreement concerns the conditions under which they are willing to do so.

The Taliban want to get rid of the international troops, to regain control of the centralized government and to install an "Islamic system" in Afghanistan. The degree of availability of the Taliban - their front is not compact but rather heterogeneous - to make compromises on this topic is unknown. There are doubts as to whether they will be able to subsequently conclude peace with the Afghan government, and even more on the effective respect of an agreement (there is no historical precedent for comfort), probably preferring a clash that could lead them to victory. In this case there is a strong incentive on their part to intensify the campaign of attacks and violence⁹ during the elections, as it is happening.

However, the Afghanistan donors will be decisive in the continuation of the peace negotiations¹⁰, since they bear the costs of most of the security sector and pay the bills of the civil government¹¹.

Although there are differences of vision between the Pentagon - more cautious about a withdrawal, on the same line Republican senator Graham and generals Keane and Petraeus - and the CIA, more influenced by the presidential visions, the US wants to withdraw its troops (this it is the longest and most costly war in human and financial terms ever advocated by Washington¹²), and to set a peace agreement that guarantees that the Taliban will fight the Islamic State Afghan affiliates. This commitment should be easy to obtain considering that for the Taliban the Islamic State is a sworn enemy, making them to give up al-Qaeda could be more difficult.

The Taliban seemed ready to satisfy at least the United States request for a public declaration in order not to allow terrorists to use their territory as a basis for international attacks, but regarding the mechanisms for verifying effective compliance with the agreement, there were no elements.

As the elections approached, attacks and violent actions by the Taliban increased, in an inversely proportional relationship, as the diplomacy of violence¹³ is the picklock against a government that they do not recognize and despise, the simple threat of attacks is the main diplomatic weapon¹⁴.

The Trump administration has sought to exert pressure on the Taliban to negotiate with the Afghan government by employing various elements: exercising maximum military pressure, especially through intensified air strikes and special forces raids; targeting the financial sources of the Taliban, including the bombing of opium production plants and the containment of foreign cash flows; publicly questioning the legitimacy of the Taliban war, even among religious groups, and ultimately putting pressure on Pakistan to capture or expel allegedly Taliban Afghan leaders based on its territory.

8 Gli argomenti dei negoziati erano: assicurazioni su contro-terrorismo, dialogo e negoziati intra-afghani, un cessate il fuoco permanente e integrale e il ritiro delle truppe straniere, quest'ultimo punto era la *conditio sine qua non* indicata da Stanekzai per il dialogo intra-afghano; New York Times, "Stressing War's Toll, Taliban and Afghan Representatives Agree to Peace Road Map," 7/8/2019.

9 M. O'Hanlon, "Is the Afghanistan deal a good one?", Brookings Institution, August 16, 2019; <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/08/16/is-the-afghanistan-deal-a-good-one/>.

10 AAN Team "The Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan: An agenda for peace and development?", Afghanistan Analysts Network, 25 November 2018, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-geneva-ministerial-conference-on-afghanistan-an-agenda-for-peace-and-development/>.

11 AP, "Envoy to Afghanistan Says US Not 'Cutting and Running'," 7/12/2019.

12 M. Afzal, S. Rehman, Z. Hussain, and S. Bashir, "A deal too far? Breakdown of peace talks and prospects for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the region", Brookings Institution, September 19, 2019; <https://jinnah-institute.org/feature/a-deal-too-far/>.

13 DOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 12/2018, p. 1 and 6/2019, p. 1.

14 P. Baker, M. Mashal, M. Crowley, "How Trump's Plan to Secretly Meet With the Taliban Came Together, and Fell Apart", New York Times, Sep 8, 2019; <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/08/world/asia/afghanistan-trump-camp-david-taliban.html>.

These efforts did not meet the targets: intense military pressure slowed the Taliban's territorial expansion and many fighters (including some important commanders) were killed in the last year, but the group managed to maintain territory control and its operational capacity to carry out deadly attacks throughout the country. By contrast, intense US air strikes have drawn harsh criticism for causing civilian casualties.

Despite the bombing of drug laboratories, the Taliban do not appear to face a financial crisis.

Islamic scholars have held various meetings, including in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, during which violence in Afghanistan was condemned and the Taliban were asked to initiate peace talks with the Afghan government: their response was that the talks are part of an "American plan" to justify Washington's war.

The Trump administration adopted a strict approach with Pakistan and has suspended assistance and security aid. Islamabad, which denies helping the Taliban, said it was ready to help starting a peace process in Afghanistan, but there are few signs of a paradigm shift. In addition, the Taliban are diplomatically active at a regional level with Russia, Iran¹⁵ and China, interested in the hydrocarbons and the precious minerals as well as Kabul' geo-strategic position.

Several factors are responsible for the intensification of the conflict in Afghanistan¹⁶: both sides are trying to break the deadlock in their favor; the validity of the American strategy for the lack of political clarity since 2001 is in doubt; tens of thousands of Taliban fighters have been killed, injured or captured in these two decades, but their uprising shows no signs of weakness. A decade ago, the governments of the United States and Afghanistan had estimated a presence of around 15,000 rebels in Afghanistan. Today, the estimated number of militants exceeds 60,000, plus supporters and other anti-government groups. The emergence of the Khorasan branch of the Islamic State in Afghanistan and Pakistan has raised the level of violence and brutality.

Since the talks idea gained momentum, the Taliban wanted to maximize their position of strength at the negotiating table. The growing tension between the United States and regional actors - particularly Pakistan, Russia and Iran - is also having a negative impact. American and Afghan officials have accused these three countries, which deny supporting the Taliban.

Two important elements still remain outside the negotiations: the Afghan government and, above all, the Afghans.

The presidential elections

The 28th September elections took place with relative calm¹⁷, although around 400 minor attacks were recorded - in Kandahar, Jalalabad and in the provinces of Faryab and Laghman – and the turnout was the lowest recorded in the history of the country (26% of those entitled to vote¹⁸).

Final results are expected for the beginning of November¹⁹. If no candidate reaches the majority, on November 23 a second round is scheduled for the ballot.

15 SIGAR, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, Jul 30, 2019, pag. 146; <https://www.sigar.mil/quarterlyreports/>.

16 ACAPS Afghanistan Scenarios report, June 2019; https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/190705_acaps_nrc_scenarios_displacement_and_access_in_afghanistan.pdf.

17 Reuters, "Afghan presidential vote held in relative calm, but turn out low", Sep 28, 2019; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-election/afghan-presidential-vote-held-in-relative-calm-but-turnout-low-idUSKBN1WD03C>.

18 B. Osman, G. Smith, "Afghanistan's Low-turnout Election, Insecurity and Unsettled Prospects for Peace", International Crisis Group, " October 2019; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/afghanistans-low-turnout-election-insecurity-and-unsettled-prospects-peace>.

19 AlJazeera "Afghan presidential election: security still tops voter's mind", 26 Sep. 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/afghan-presidential-election-security-tops-voters-mind-190925121030409.html>.

To contend for the victory of the elections, already postponed twice²⁰, 16 candidates stand (including veterans such as Hekmatyar, Nur ul-Haq Ulumi, Ahmad Wali Massud), but only two men have real chances of winning: incumbent President Ashraf Ghani and his rival, Chief Executive Officer (a special post invented in 2014) Abdullah Abdullah. Veterans of a forced and bellicose cohabitation lasting five years under the banner of unity, they both believe they can form a government. They are widely criticized by the population for failing to curb violence, to prevent an economic recession and to tackle endemic corruption across the country and at all levels of government²¹ (Secretary of State Pompeo has canceled the pledge of 160 million dollars of aid on the corruption charge), dragging their personality and ethnic²² clash in infighting that invalidated and undermined government action²³.

Of the 7,366 polling stations, only 5,388 remained open because the security forces were unable to protect them all, and the Electoral Commission lost contact with about 900 polling stations. Deputy Interior Minister Khoshal Sadat said that a huge security operation saw 72,000 policemen dedicated to protecting the stations, but the entire security apparatus is weakening and fragmenting²⁴.

Afghans are discouraged from voting by the lack of confidence in the political system perceived as highly dependent on Washington (however, it is from the time of the Obama administration that relations have progressively deteriorated), the economic situation and above all the security conditions²⁵. The voter has his/her finger marked with indelible ink, to avoid repeated voting: the Taliban have already threatened voters in past elections and cut the voters fingers²⁶.

They combine aggressive narrative and violence against candidates and activists, the threats began as early as August²⁷ indeed.

At the 2014 presidential elections, the results were so affected by fraud, delays and so strongly contested²⁸, that State Secretary Kerry had to intervene to mediate for a national unity government. In reality, every election in the last decade has been compromised by numerous frauds and ravaged by violence²⁹, fears are growing that the situation continues to deteriorate³⁰.

The main problems relate to the lack of reliable data, the impact of insecurity on voter turnout and voting rights, the role of social media, the risks arising from the biometric verification of voters and the role of international observers and representatives of political parties at the polling stations.

20 SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, April 30, 2019, pag. 108.

21 "US: Afghanistan has failed to fight corruption", The National, Sep 19, 2019; <https://www.thenational.ae/world/asia/us-afghanistan-has-failed-to-fight-corruption-1.912511>.

22 "Afghanistan: The Future of the National Unity Government", International Crisis Group, Rep. n. 285, 2017; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/285-afghanistan-future-national-unity-government>.

23 United Nations, The situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security, Report of the Secretary-General, 6/14/2019, p. 3; https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_afghanistan_-_english_-_14_june_2019.pdf.

24 CSTC-A, response to SIGAR data call, 6/21/2019; and response to SIGAR vetting, 7/12/2019; SIGAR, analysis of CSTC-A provided data, 7/2019; DOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 6/2019, p. 33.

25 E. Graham-Harrison, M. Amiri, "Afghanistan polls close after day of violence, fraud claims and chaos", The Guardian, 28 Sep 2019; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/28/afghanistan-presidential-election-voting-begins-taliban-violence>.

26 "Afghan election: Taliban 'removed voters' fingers", BBC, 15 June 2014; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27857343>.

27 R. McBride, "Afghanistan polls: Taliban threatens attacks to keep voters away", Al Jazeera, 23 Sep 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/afghanistan-polls-taliban-threatens-attacks-voters-190923073420281.html>.

28 "EU Election Assessment Team in Afghanistan in 2014", EEAS, 2014; https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/election-observation-missions-eueoms_en/23908/EU%20Election%20Assessment%20Team%20in%20Afghanistan%20in%202014.

29 E. Graham-Harrison, "'Voting means you're crazy': violence and fraud overshadow Afghanistan poll", 22 Sep 2019; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/22/afghanistan-ballot-voting-means-crazy-fear-taliban>.

30 T. Ruttig, M. van Bijlert, A. Y. Adili, J. Bjelica, Afghanistan Analysts Network, "Afghanistan's 2019 Election (10): What to watch out for on election day", 26 September 2019; <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistans-2019-election-10-what-to-watch-out-for-on-election-day/>.

Whoever will be declared the winner will have the task of trying to negotiate a ceasefire first³¹ (so far the requests in this sense have been repeatedly rejected by the Taliban), extending an agreement to protect the Afghan security forces and building some form of shared government that does not cancel the gains of two decades of democracy (especially the women³² rights) trying to avoid the outbreak of a civil war in case of dispute over legitimacy³³.

The human costs of the war

An average of 74 men, women and children were killed each day in Afghanistan during August 2019³⁴; violence hit almost the entire country. Some 611 security incidents were confirmed, killing 2,307 people, most of them were fighters, a fifth were civilians, and a further 1,948 people were injured.

The death toll is just a snapshot of the situation in Afghanistan depicting a bleak picture, while US President Trump seeks to achieve a key foreign policy goal and to withdraw the troops: a ceasefire has not ever been negotiated³⁵.

The Taliban have never been stronger since 2001 and have been holding offensive positions during peace talks. It is hard to say how many members of the ANDSF - Afghan National Defense and Security Forces - died: the numbers are no longer published. In January 2019, President Ghani said that 45,000 members of the security forces have been killed since 2014. The figures for Afghan civilians are more difficult to calculate: according to the UNAMA report, in the first six months of 2019, the armed conflict continued to inflict significant damage by killing and mutilating thousands of people, removing families from their homes with serious consequences for the essential services including education and health care. In the first six months of 2019, UNAMA documented 3,812 civilian deaths, with a 27% increase in civilian deaths compared to the second quarter of 2019: anti-government elements continued to cause the majority of civilian victims³⁶. Brown University's Watson Institute says 42,000 opposition fighters have died³⁷.

The war in Afghanistan has lasted for four decades and has been stalling for several years. At the end of last year, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, ACLED³⁸, has named Afghanistan the most lethal conflict in the world for battle-related deaths and the 2019 data on victims show that Afghanistan maintains this position. The victims of August 2019 in Afghanistan are three times higher than those of Syria or Yemen, according to ACLED data. In June 2019, Afghanistan was named the least peaceful place in the world by the Global Peace Index Report³⁹.

31 VOA, "Taliban Reject US, Afghan Demands for Cease-Fire," 5/3/2019; Reuters, "Afghan Taliban leader pledges to keep fighting until goals met," 6/1/2019.

32 United Nations Secretary General, "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", Report of the Secretary-General, A/73/990-S/2019/703, 3 September 2019; https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sq_report_on_afghanistan_english_3_september_2019.pdf.

33 J. Dobbins, J.H. Campbell, S. Mann, L.E. Miller, "Consequences of a Precipitous U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan", RAND Corporation, January 2019; https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE300/PE326/RAND_PE326.pdf.

34 "Afghanistan war: Tracking the killings in August 2019", BBC, 16 September 2019; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49662640>.

35 M. E. O'Hanlon, "Is the Afghanistan deal a good one?", August 16, 2019; <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/08/16/is-the-afghanistan-deal-a-good-one/>.

36 UNAMA, Human Rights Service, "MIDYEAR UPDATE ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT:

1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2019", 30 July 2019;

https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_poc_midyear_update_2019_-_30_july_2019_english.pdf.

37 <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>.

38 <https://www.acleddata.com/tag/afghanistan/>.

39 <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/06/GPI-2019-web003.pdf>.

Many, not only in Washington, fear that a complete withdrawal of US troops would leave a gap⁴⁰ filled in by militant groups that could organize attacks in the West.

40 D. Petraeus, "The U.S. Abandoned Iraq. Don't Repeat History in Afghanistan", Aug 9, 2019; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-u-s-abandoned-iraq-dont-repeat-history-in-afghanistan-11565385301>.

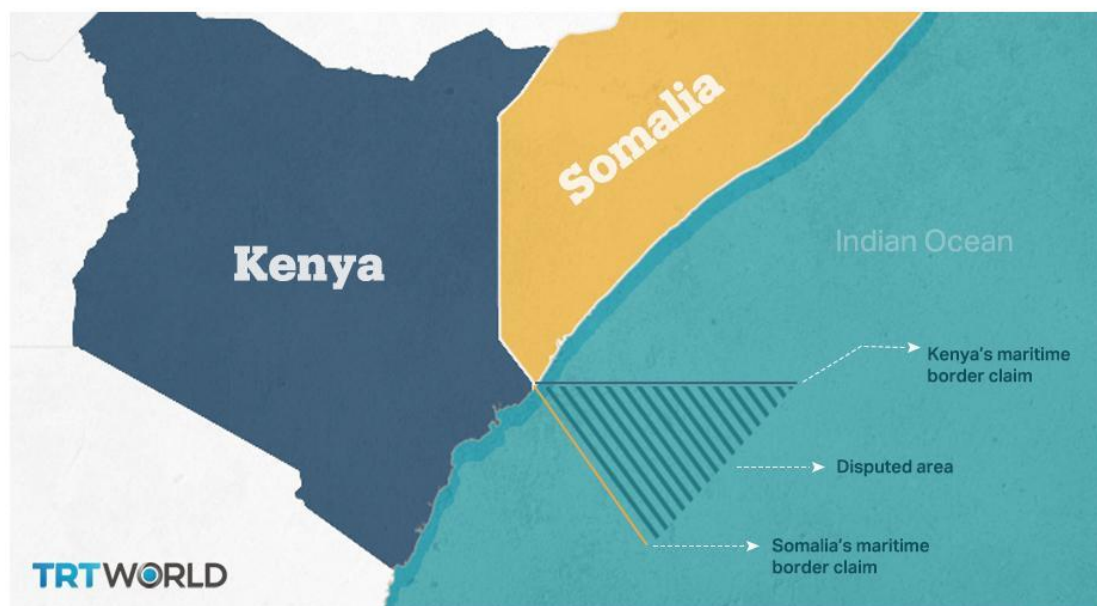
The relationship between Kenya and Somalia

On 25 September, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Somali counterpart Mohammed Abdullahi Mohamed met in New York in occasion of the UN General Assembly. The meeting had a high symbolic value, in so far as it sanctioned the commitment of the two heads of state to normalize bilateral relations¹. The fact that the authorities of two neighbouring countries resorted to the mediation of the Egyptian President Al Sisi for organization of the meeting, however, is proof of the enduring tensions between Mogadishu and Nairobi. Frictions reached an unprecedented level between August and September, in conjunction with the elections in the southern region of Jubbaland and the approaching of the hearing before the International Court of Justice on the maritime border dispute between the two countries.

The dispute before the International Court of Justice

The dispute between Somalia and Kenya before the International Court of Justice concerns a sea triangle of about 100,000 square kilometers off the port of Lamu, in northern Kenya, but considered by Mogadishu as an integral part of its continental shelf. The position of the Somali government is based on an interpretation of the maritime border as projected southeast towards the Indian Ocean, in line with the trajectory of the land border. Kenya has always rejected these claims, arguing that the demarcation of the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf between the two countries should follow a parallel line from the intersection of land boundary. The controversy is of material and symbolic value. For Somalia, the submission to the Court in August 2014 represented a fundamental step towards regaining the country's international sovereignty after decades of civil war. The presence of potential offshore oil fields is an additional incentive for a government that barely controls the immediate surroundings of the capital, but could obtain access to large sources of revenue without bearing the costs of administrative de-concentration and security enforcement. For Kenya, defeat would translate into the loss of a sea area corresponding to about 26% of its Exclusive Economic Zone and a threat to the future of Lamu, the port that is intended to become the hub for offshore and on-shore oil production in northern Kenya.

¹ Africa News, 25 September 2019. <https://www.africanews.com/2019/09/25/kenya-somalia-agree-to-normalise-relations/>



Source: AFP 2

The first hearing before the Court was scheduled on September 13, but then postponed to November following Kenya's request to appoint a new pool of defenders³. The Kenyan strategy has always focused on moving the dispute from the judicial to the diplomatic realm, where Nairobi have greater political weight. Kenyan lawyers have repeatedly objected the incompetence of the International Court on the ground of an agreement signed in 2009 by the then Somali Minister for International Cooperation and, in the alternative, the existence of alternative resolution mechanisms⁴.

The months before the hearing were tense. Frictions started at the beginning of 2019, following rumours that the Somali government had secretly auctioned exploration rights in the disputed maritime area. Nairobi reacted by calling its ambassador in Mogadishu back home, while a senior officer at the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs threatened the use of force to protect national territorial integrity⁵. In May, in response to the ban placed by authorities to the participation of Somali diplomats to an international conference in Nairobi, the Somali government ordered all Nairobi-based non-governmental organizations operating in Somalia to leave the country immediately or move their headquarters⁶. In June, Kenyan authorities decided to close the border traffic in the Lamu area for security reasons. The assertiveness of the Kenyatta government has been stigmatised at home⁷. Nevertheless, it is precisely because of internal pressures from the parliament that the executive has adopted such an aggressive stance⁸.

2 TRT World, 5 March 2019. <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/explaining-the-kenya-somalia-maritime-dispute-24670>

3 VOA News 3 September 2019. <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Al-Shabaab-leader-slams-Kenyas-claims-on-Somali-waters/1056-5280786-12c469bz/index.html>; International Court of Justice, Press Release, 6 September 2019, <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/161/161-20190906-PRE-01-00-EN.pdf>

4 Chan, K.-. chieh ., 2018. The ICJ's Judgement in *Somalia v. Kenya* and Its Implications for the Law of the Sea. *Utrecht Journal of International and European Law*, 34(2), pp.195–204. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/ujel.450>

5 K. Sabala, The Kenya Somalia Maritime Border Dispute, SSRC Briefing, 25, 2019. https://s3.amazonaws.com/ssrc-cdn1/crmuploads/new_publication_3/the-kenya-somalia-maritime-border-dispute-an-unnecessary-diplomatic-row.pdf

6 The Citizen, 10 June 2019. <https://citizen.co.za/news/news-africa/2141237/leaked-somali-document-on-maritime-dispute-heightens-tensions-with-kenya/>

7 The Star, 23 February 2019. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/opinion/leader/2019-02-23-allow-icj-to-determine-somalia-border-dispute/>

8 The Africa Report, 13 August 2019. https://www.theafricareport.com/16164/kenya-and-somalias-maritime-border-spat-risks-degenerating/?utm_source=newsletter_tar_daily&utm_campaign=newsletter_tar_daily_13_08_2019&utm_medium=email&fbclid=IwAR0oJ8-jCIXbMwpYhsp83VhzzUHTMq7okDd9Ak9B4M2soMa4fiBwVMNIRqw

The reconstructions of the dispute in the media are paradigmatic of the two governments' positions. Pro-Nairobi voices accuse Somalia of acting in contrast with the principles of good neighbourhood. Moreover, they argue that the dispute weakens the common fight against Al Shabaab, damaging Somalia itself⁹. Pro-Somali voices, on the other hand, denounce the diplomatic escalation promoted by Nairobi as an attempt to force Mogadishu to an arbitration against its will¹⁰. The Somali government's refusal to come to terms with this option is also taken as a proof of resistance against Kenya's "imperialist" attitude in southern Somalia, where it maintains a foot on the ground through the Jubbaland administration. The "imperialist" thesis was somehow subscribed by the Somali delegation before the International Court of Justice when it argued that the 2009 bilateral agreement between Kenya and Somalia was void, as the treaty had been somewhat extorted during the civil war and signed with an authority with no power to act on behalf of the Somali state on the international scene.

Kenya's reluctance to face the judgement is also attributable to the orientation of the International Court of Justice. The international community has historically used two competing principles to define maritime borders: equidistance and equity. While Nairobi has always maintained the superiority of the second principle to protect its positions in the Indian Ocean, recent rulings of the Court seem to favour the application of the equidistance principle, which is more in line with Somalia's argument. Equidistance was adopted in 2002 by the International Court to settle the dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula, while equity was limited to the delimitation process on the ground¹¹.

Tensions on Jubbaland

The dispute before the International Court of Justice is likely to shape the balance of power along the Kenyan-Somali maritime frontier. The tensions surrounding the electoral appointment in Jubbaland, on the other hand, are paradigmatic of the daily competition between Mogadishu and Nairobi for control of the hinterland of southern Somalia, since 2013 under the direct sphere of influence of the Kenyan security apparatus.

The Somali government hoped that the electoral round of 22 August would bring a new candidate to the presidency of the southern region after six years of unchallenged domination by Kenya's ally Ahmed Madobe. Before elections, however, Kisimaio and Mogadishu exchanged accusations on the manipulation of the vote¹². Madobe's reconfirmation did not ease the situation, because the federal government rejected the outcome of the ballot and suspended any institutional collaboration.

The dispute between Jubbaland and Mogadishu is a Pandora box that could negatively affect the institution building process in Somalia and regional stability as well. On the domestic front, the federal government's reaction consisted in the ban of direct flights between Jubbaland and the rest of the world¹³. The air transport measure was also designed to reaffirm the principle of the federal government's ultimate responsibility in maintaining internal order. This emerged clearly a few days after the elections, when the federal police took advantage of the stopover in Mogadishu of one of Madobe's main collaborators - the Minister of Security of Jubbaland, Abdirashid Janan - to arrest him on the basis of torture charges made by the Monitoring Group for Somalia in 2017.

9 East Africa Monitor, 13 August 2019. <https://eastafricamonitor.com/somalia-is-in-a-lose-lose-situation-over-kenya-border-spat/>

10 Al Jazeera, 2 March 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/kenya-icj-settle-maritime-dispute-somalia-190301085647698.html>

11 The Citizen, 18 July 2019. <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/1840340-5200976-985mjn/index.html>

12 http://www.difesa.it/SMD_/CASD/IM/CeMiSS/Documenti/Vis/Osservatorio_Strategico_2019/OS_02_2019/07_PUDDU_OS_02_2019.pdf

13 All Africa, 3 September 2019. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201909020153.html>

The capture, while applauded by international associations for the defence of human rights¹⁴, worsened relations with Kismaio where, in the meantime, one of the main candidates of the opposition was seriously injured in unclear circumstances¹⁵. On 22 September, the last chapter of the crisis: the federal government suspended all flights to and from Kismaio, to prevent former President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed from attending the ceremony for Madobe's electoral victory¹⁶.

The Jubbaland affair also poisoned the relationship between Somalia's two main partners in the war on Al Shabaab: Kenya and Ethiopia. Addis Ababa was the main intermediary of Mogadishu in Kismaio since the rise of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. In return, the Somali federal government supported the new Ethiopian political course with the arrest of some senior officials loyal to the former president of Somali Regional State Abdi Iley, detained in Ethiopian prisons since the summer of 2018¹⁷. Ethiopia's leverage in Jubbaland can be traced back to the longstanding relations between the security apparatus of Addis Ababa and Ahmed Madobe. The presence of Ethiopian troops on the ground within the AMISOM structure is another critical factor. The territorial distribution of the mission assigns Jubbaland to sector 2, under the control of Kenya, but it combines the predominance of Nairobi with an Ethiopian-Kenyan condominium on sector 6, where the strategic port of Chisimaio is located¹⁸.

During the run-up to the elections, Addis Ababa lobbied on behalf of the federal government for the reopening of the deadlines for the presentation of candidates. Madobe's resistance to these demands opened a diplomatic crisis between Addis Ababa and Nairobi. A few days before the elections, the Kenyan commander in sector 2 rejected the request of the Ethiopian counterpart from sector 6 to deploy additional Ethiopian soldiers at the airport of Kismaio¹⁹. This was probably motivated by Ahmed Madobe's fears of an increasing Ethiopian military presence in the run-up to the elections, because a few days later Jubbaland forces occupied the Kismaio airstrip to prevent the descent of an Ethiopian plane transporting troops to the city²⁰. Nairobi also clashed with other international partners within UNSOM: on 20 August, Kenya rejected the statement of the United Nations Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan, who expressed regret for the lack of inclusivity in the electoral process²¹.

Analysis, assessments and forecasts

The combination of the dispute before the International Court of Justice and the electoral turn in Jubbaland brought the relationship between Kenya and Somalia to the lowest point since the Shifta-war in the 1970s. Nairobi is keen to avoid a judicial solution to the dispute and could explore any option to prevent Mogadishu from gaining control of the contested area, including the withdrawal of Kenyan troops from AMISOM or exploiting patronage networks in southern Somalia to fuel unrest. The electoral dispute with Jubbaland also represents the highest point of the tensions between Mogadishu and regional states since 2017. Mohammed Abdullahi Mohammed remains a strong supporter of centralization, but he is confronted by powerful regional stakeholders with independent connections with the external world. Tensions between Kenya and Ethiopia within AMISOM pose a threat to the effectiveness of the AU mission in southern Somalia, where

14 Somaliland, 14 September, <https://www.somaliland.com/security/madobes-fierce-rival-wounded-in-kismayo/>

15 <http://www.somalidispach.com/featured/amnesty-international-welcomes-the-arrest-of-abdirashid-janan/>

16 Goobjoog News, 22 September 2019. <http://goobjoog.com/english/ex-president-sharif-barred-from-madobes-inauguration/>

17 Africa News, 27 May 2019. <https://www.africanews.com/2019/05/27/somalia-arrests-deports-ex-head-of-ethiopia-torture-home-jail-ogaden/>

18 Dawit Yohannes, Daniel Kebede, AMISOM: Charting a new course for African Union peace missions, *African Security Review*, 26: 2, 2017.

19 <https://twitter.com/HarunMaruf/status/1163531582428332034?s=19>

20 <https://twitter.com/HarunMaruf/status/1163482034473492480>

21 SRSG James Swan - Remarks to the Security Council on the Situation in Somalia, 21 August 2019. <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/srsg-james-swan-remarks-security-council-situation-somalia-21-august-2019>

Kenyan contingents have been repeatedly criticized for the lack of coordination with other AMISOM partners²². Al Shabaab might exploit this rift. The movement already agitated the spectre of a Western plot against Moslems, arguing that Kenya's aggressive attitude urged a reaction in the form of a mass mobilization to defend the sovereignty of Somalia²³.

22 Paul D. Williams, *Fighting for Peace in Somalia: a history and analysis of AMISOM*, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 148.

23 The Nation, 20 September 2019. <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Al-Shabaab-leader-slams-Kenyas-claims-on-Somali-waters/1056-5280786-12c469bz/index.html>

Eastern Economic Forum: Russia and the economic “pivot to Asia”

In recent years, the progressive deterioration of relations with the United States and with European partners has led the Russian Federation to turn its gaze towards Asia, in the search for more stable and lasting ties centred on mutual interests. The literature on the alleged Russian “pivot to Asia” and its success (or not) at the expense of Western partners is now quite substantial. Although Putin estimates that the EU has lost about \$ 240 billion in trade with Russia (and Moscow \$ 50 billion) since the introduction of sanctions in 2014¹, in the short to medium term it is difficult to imagine that Moscow could ignore Europe, which remains its main economic partner² and technology provider. Nevertheless, Moscow is developing a series of partnerships with various Asian states with a view to expanding partners and markets and diversifying its economic activities³.

One of the main vectors of this strategy is the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, created in 2015 on the model of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum and aimed at opening up new Asian opportunities for Russian companies and Asian companies in Russia, as well as strengthening the ties between Russian companies and federal, regional and local government agencies on the one hand and international investments on the other hand. A further objective of the Forum is to improve the competitiveness of the Russian Far East, a region rich in resources but sparsely populated, thus showing investors the new opportunities arising from advanced special economic zones, the free port of Vladivostok and state support for high potential investment projects⁴. The Vladivostok Forum is taking on increasing importance, as the contracts signed during the 2018 edition amount to over \$ 46 billion, against the \$ 38 billion of the St. Petersburg Forum of the same year⁵.

Delegations from 65 states and over 440 companies, with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as guest of honour, took part in the 2019 edition (the 5th) of the Eastern Economic Forum entitled “The Far East - Development Horizons”, organized by the Roscongress Foundation and held from 4 to 6 September at the Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU) of the Russkij Island. Overall, 270 agreements were signed for an amount of over \$ 53 billion⁶, a record if compared to the previous four editions, even higher than the 2019 edition of the St. Petersburg Forum⁷. At an official level, the importance attributed by the Kremlin to Asian markets is also demonstrated by the numerous bilateral meetings organized with regional leaders present at the Forum: from the Japanese and Indian prime ministers, Shinzo Abe and the aforementioned Narendra Modi, to the

1 “EU Lost 5 Times More From Sanctions Than Russia, Putin Says”, *The Moscow Times*, 20/06/2019 (<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/06/20/eu-lost-5-times-more-from-sanctions-than-russia-putin-says-a66086>).

2 The volume of trade between Russia and the European Union grew by 20% in 2018, according to data from the Russian Ministry of Industry and Commerce, while in April 2019 the same figure increased by 2.2% compared to the previous year, according to Eurostat. See: “Russia-EU trade turnover up 20% in 2018”, *TASS*, 11/03/2019 (<https://tass.com/economy/1048116>); “2019 Russian – EU Bilateral Trade Increasing”, *Russia Briefing*, 27/06/2019 (<https://www.russia-briefing.com/news/2019-russian-eu-bilateral-trade-increasing.html/>).

3 Alexey Khlebnikov, “A Russian Pivot to Asia?”, *The National Interest*, 01/11/2018 (<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/russian-pivot-asia-34892>).

4 “5th Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) held in Vladivostok”, *GKToday*, 06/09/2019 (<https://currentaffairs.gktoday.in/5th-eastern-economic-forum-eef-held-vladivostok-09201983288.html>).

5 Ibidem.

6 “Outcomes of the Eastern Economic Forum 2019”, *China Daily*, 17/09/2019 (<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201909/17/WS5d803c2ca310cf3e3556bdb7.html>).

7 In the 2019 edition of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (3-6 June) were signed 745 agreements, for a total of 3.271 trillion rubles, equivalent to over \$ 51 billion. See: “Outcomes of SPIEF 2019”, *St. Petersburg International Economic Forum*, The Roscongress Foundation (<https://forums.spb.com/en/news/news/itogi-raboty-pmef-2019/>).

president of Mongolia, Khaltmaagiin Battulga, up to the Chinese deputy premier Hu Chunhua and the prime minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad⁸.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed the importance of measures aimed at supporting the Russian Far East, which allowed to attract \$ 9.27 billion in investment over the past five years, to operate 242 new plants and to create over 39,000 jobs, boosting the five-year industrial growth to 23%, almost three times higher than the national average⁹. Among the sectors that are considered as strategic for the development of the region, Russia intends to provide incentives to companies involved in advanced refining, as well as to favour aircraft construction, gas refining and the petrochemical industry. The Zvezda Shipbuilding Complex, an extension of the existing Zvezda shipyard located in the Bolshoi Kamen bay, is expected to contribute to this purpose. Construction work began in 2009 and is expected to finish in 2024, at an estimated cost of approximately \$ 4.2 billion¹⁰: once completed, the Zvezda should become the largest shipbuilding complex in Russia, equipped to build all types of ships, both merchant and military. This complex was also designed to facilitate the logistics of naval vessels transiting towards Arctic maritime routes¹¹. In addition, Putin has made clear his intention to attract foreign partners to expand the Vostochnyj cosmodrome (located in the Amur oblast), the first civilian spaceport designed to reduce Russian dependence on the Baikonur space center in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the Federation intends to develop partnerships to strengthen the aeronautics industry in the region, where the Komsomolsk-on-Amur Aircraft Plant is already present, located in the Russian Far East city of the same name. This company is the largest Russian aircraft manufacturer, which builds the Su-27SM/SKM, the Su-30MK2 multi-role fighters, the Su-33 and Su-27KUB embarked fighters, and the Be-103 amphibious seaplanes, and will produce the fifth-generation multi-role fighter Su-57¹².

The Eastern Economic Forum has shown a considerable attention to the Arctic region and economic projects in the Far North of Russia, mainly from India. Energy cooperation is a priority area of the Russian-Indian partnership¹³. India, one of the largest hydrocarbon consumers in the world, needs to diversify its energy supplies: the Arctic fields, to be jointly exploited with Moscow, may have influenced New Delhi's decision to join the Arctic Council as a permanent observer¹⁴. As stated by Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak, Moscow is steadily increasing its energy supplies to India: in the first six months of 2019, the export of petroleum products to New Delhi increased by 17.6% (amounting to 1.36 million tons) and that of coal increased by 25% (up to 3.05 million tons). The Indian companies have also expressed their interest in increasing the supply of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG), notably what should come from the future Arctic Lng-2 and Arctic Lng-3 plants¹⁵.

The new maxi-project Arctic Lng-2 - costing \$ 21 billion, a capacity of almost 20 million tons a year, as well as the start of export planned in 2023 - pursues the Russian intent to become a global

8 "Russia: concluso Forum economico orientale, grande attenzione su mercati asiatici", *Agenzia Nova*, 06/09/2019 (<https://www.agenzianova.com/a/5d72561daaa0e1.08236257/2593810/2019-09-06/russia-concluso-forum-economico-orientale-grande-attenzione-su-mercati-asiatici>).

9 "Investments in Russia's Far East amounted to \$9.3 bln in 5 years, says Putin", *TASS*, 05/09/2019 (<https://tass.com/economy/1076627>).

10 "Zvezda Shipbuilding Complex, Bolshoi Kamen", *Ship Technology* (<https://www.ship-technology.com/projects/zvezda-shipbuilding-complex-bolshoi-kamen/>).

11 "About SSC Zvezda", *Shipbuilding Complex "Zvezda"* (<http://www.sskzvezda.ru/index.php/en/about>).

12 "Russia's next-generation warplane to make maiden flight in 2009", *Sputnik*, 21/01/2019 (<https://sputniknews.com/russia/20090121119740202/>).

13 «Традиционно дружественные отношения»: какие вопросы обсудят Владимир Путин и Нарендра Моди во Владивостоке, *Russia Today*, 03/09/2019 (https://russian.rt.com/world/article/664880-rossiya-indiya-putin-peregovory?mc_cid=f1b2e3a2e6&mc_eid=966be4b949).

14 Sergey Sukhankin, *Eastern Economic Forum Confirms Strong Foreign Interest in Russian Arctic Territories*, Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 16, No. 124, September 12, 2019 (<https://jamestown.org/program/eastern-economic-forum-confirms-strong-foreign-interest-in-russian-arctic-territories/>).

15 "Indian companies interested in gas supplies from Arctic LNG-2, Arctic LNG-3", *TASS*, 31/08/2019 (https://tass.com/economy/1075869?mc_cid=f1b2e3a2e6&mc_eid=966be4b949).

giant also in the LNG sector, as well as in the pipeline supply, so as to compete directly with US shale gas¹⁶. Participation in this project (60% of the Russian Novatek; 10% of the French Total; 10% of the Chinese CNPC; 10% of the Chinese CNOOC; 10% of the Japanese consortium Japan Arctic Lng, composed of Mitsui and Jgmech¹⁷) testifies that, except for the French Total, the other partners are Asians, as Asia should be the destination of a large part (80%) of the future production of LNG coming from this plant.

Narendra Modi's speech highlighted the strengthening of the Indo-Russian agreement, which was expressed in various sectors. The head of the Indian executive announced a \$ 1 billion line of credit for the development of the Russian Far Eastern area, stressing that it is the first such measure linked to a specific region of a foreign country that New Delhi has ever adopted. Modi added that the involvement of over 150 Indian entrepreneurs has contributed to the identification of new horizons of cooperation in the mining, agricultural, timber, paper and tourism sectors, highlighting how bilateral cooperation has been diversified over time compared to traditional and important sectors of energy and defence¹⁸. The Indo-Russian collaboration has reached a new level that goes beyond the mere deepening of economic-commercial ties: during Modi's visit to Vladivostok, the two countries issued a joint statement in which they agreed to “intensify consultations on complementarities between integration and development initiatives in greater Eurasian space and in the regions of Indian and Pacific Oceans” in order to build “an equal and indivisible security architecture in Asia and the Pacific region”¹⁹. From a terminological point of view, which nevertheless underlies a geopolitical background, Moscow and New Delhi have condensed their respective geopolitical concepts into a (though simple) declaration of intent: the “Greater Eurasia” as an integrated macro-region – in the Russian concept – and the Indo-Pacific which, although linked semantically to the US and Japanese geopolitical vision, was adopted by India and declined in terms of broad and inclusive macro-regional cooperation “from the coasts of Africa to those of the Americas”²⁰. Although Russia's partnership with Pakistan and China worries India, Moscow and New Delhi have shared interests in ensuring a prosperous and stable Eurasia, and to this end they are adopting different initiatives across the continent: from transport corridors, in particular the International North – South Transport Corridor (INSTC)²¹, which became partially operational last year, up to regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in which India was admitted in 2017 with the support of Moscow. Finally, the Russian Far East should serve as a crucial point linking continental and maritime geographies, in the light of the Indo-Russian agreement aimed at developing a sea route Vladivostok-Chennai, which can become India's springboard to the Northeast Asian market²².

Japan, which is already participating in the Sakhalin-2 project (Russia's first LNG plant), is using the energy lever in order to strengthen its partnership with Russia: Tokyo will contribute with nearly \$ 3 billion to the Arctic Lng-2 project, one of the largest in the history of Russian-Japanese

16 Sissi Bellomo, “Russia alla riscossa nel gas liquefatto: via libera ad Arctic Lng-2”, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 06/09/2019 (<https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/russia-riscossa-gas-liquefatto-via-libera-ad-arctic-lng-2-ACZxeli>).

17 “Arctic LNG 2 is another LNG production-related project of NOVATEK”, *Novatek.ru* (<http://www.novatek.ru/en/business/arctic-lng/>).

18 “Russia: concluso Forum economico orientale, grande attenzione su mercati asiatici”, op. cit.

19 “India - Russia Joint Statement during visit of Prime Minister to Vladivostok”, *Indian Ministry of External Affairs*, Vladivostok, 05/09/ 2019 (https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/31795/India_Russia_Joint_Statement_during_visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Vladivostok), cit.

20 “Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue (June 01, 2018)”, *Indian Ministry of External Affairs*, 01/06/2018 (<https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>), cit.

21 The International North – South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode network of ship, rail, and road route for moving goods between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe, aimed at increasing the commercial connectivity between the main cities involved.

22 Sharanya Rajiv, “India and Russia: Connecting Eurasia And The Indo-Pacific”, *The Moscow Times*, 10/09/2019 (<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/09/10/india-and-russia-connecting-eurasia-and-the-indo-pacific-a67220>).

relations, as stated by the Japanese Minister of Industry, Hiroshige Seko²³. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe presented a new proposal for the signing of the peace treaty between the two countries, which has been pending since the Second World War. However, Moscow, while linking the economic agreements with the signing of the peace treaty and with the resolution of the dispute for the Kuril Islands, has assumed in the dossier a more intransigent position dictated – according to Putin – by what Russia perceives as a threat related to the US deployment of land-based short-range attack missiles²⁴. Despite the controversies aforementioned, Tokyo exhibited the largest delegation at the Eastern Economic Forum, with 220 members, including many diplomats and businesspersons, and obtained important results in the oil field²⁵.

The second largest delegation of the Vladivostok Forum was the Chinese one, with 183 members led by the Vice Premier, Hu Chunhua, who attended the Russian-Chinese intergovernmental meeting on cooperation and development in the Far East together with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Jurij Trutnev. Joint Russian-Chinese projects for the area are intended to provide investments of over € 3.5 billion. Alluding to the ongoing trade war, Moscow and Beijing have promised mutual support, after announcing, that they feel discriminated on Western markets by forms of hostility and unfair competition²⁶.

Among the other players interested in investing in the Russian Far East, Australia is showing growing attention. Following the agreement signed with the local authority and with the Russian Agency for the Development of the Far East and Arctic during the Eastern Economic Forum, Tigers Realm Coal Ltd – a private Australian company active in exploration and development of mineral resources – will invest in the construction of a road artery between the sea port and the Beringovsky coal basin (autonomous district of the Chukotka, Russian Far East) and in the strengthening of the local airport, as well as in the construction of power generation plants at the local coal field. The Australian company is already active in the mine of the coal basin of Amaam (Chukotka) and expects to become an important supplier of high-quality coking coal destined to the seaborne market, through the development of its assets located near the Bering Sea coast, in Chukotka²⁷.

In this region the “Akademik Lomonosov”, from the beginning of September the world’s first-ever floating nuclear power plant and the first transportable small-capacity mobile unit started mooring at its operating site in the city of Pevek: it is a new-class energy source, based on Russian technologies of nuclear shipbuilding, it can produce up to 70 MW of electric energy and it can work as part of a floating nuclear power plant. The Akademik Lomonosov was built for the Russian regions of the extreme North and Far East, where it will produce energy for industrial structures, ports, as well as offshore oil and gas platforms²⁸.

23 Vladimir Soldatkin, Jessica Jaganathan, “Russia ups LNG race with green light on \$21 billion Arctic LNG-2 project”, *Reuters*, 05/09/2019 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-energy-novatek-lng/russia-ups-lng-race-with-green-light-on-21-billion-arctic-lng-2-project-idUSKCN1VQ0IH>); “Japan to invest about \$3 bln in Russia's Arctic LNG 2 project – Putin”, *TASS*, 29/06/2019 (<https://tass.com/economy/1066357>).

24 “Ситуация обострилась до предела”, *Kommersant*, n. 161, 09/06/2019, p. 1 (https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4082231?mc_cid=33771fe162&mc_eid=966be4b949).

25 Vladimir Rozanskij, “Economia e geopolitica eurasiatica al Forum di Vladivostok”, *AsiaNews*, 09/09/2019 (<http://www.asianews.it/notizie-it/Economia-e-geopolitica-eurasiatica-al-Forum-di-Vladivostok-47951.html>).

26 *Ibidem*.

27 “Australia’s Tigers Realm Coal agrees to equip road on Chukotka”, *TASS*, 05/09/2019 (https://tass.com/world/1076715?mc_cid=f1b2e3a2e6&mc_eid=966be4b949).

28 “World’s first floating NPP starts mooring in Russia’s Chukotka”, *TASS*, 14/09/2019 (<https://tass.com/russia/1078126>).

Events

• Russia strengthens relations with Mongolia

Russia signed a permanent bilateral Treaty on Friendship and Extensive Strategic Partnership with Mongolia, raising bilateral relations to a “whole new level”, as stated by Russian President Vladimir Putin after arriving in Mongolia on 2 September to attend – together with the Mongolian counterpart, the President Khaltmaa Battulga – at the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the joint victory over Japanese forces on the Khalkhin Gol River (1939)²⁹. Together with this Treaty, signed on September 3 in the Mongolian capital and drawn up on the basis of the 1993 Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation, Moscow and Ulan Bator have also signed ten agreements for the development of cooperation in various sectors, including the war on terrorism and assistance in trans-regional and border cooperation, as well as a protocol which restores a 2004 agreement on the cooperation between the Russian and Mongolian governments aimed at providing free-of-charge military and technical assistance to Mongolia³⁰. According to the Russian presidency, the trade exchange between the two states increased by 21% on an annual basis in 2018 and 12% in the first seven months of 2019³¹. A few weeks before the event, the “Selenga” Russian-Mongolian military exercises were held at the Munkh Khet training camp, involving around a thousand units from the Eastern Military District and as many men from the Mongolian army. These joint activities, which are held annually since 2008, were initially called “Darkhan” and had a tactical function, but since 2011, they have been renamed “Selenga” and focus mainly on anti-terrorism activities³². Russia considers Mongolia as a strategic country, with which it shares 3.485 km of borders and where China is investing heavily, as well as the United States³³, with which Ulan Bator has recently signed a strategic partnership agreement³⁴.

• Tajikistan, the Rogun hydroelectric project continues

During the commissioning ceremony of the generating unit, which coincided with Tajikistan’s day of independence (9 September), the Tajik president Emomali Rahmon symbolically inaugurated the second turbine of the Rogun project³⁵. This project, renamed “record dam”, involves the construction of a rock dam (with a clay core) on the Vakhsh River (Pamir plateau), 335 meters high, the highest in the world and the most powerful in the region. Once completed, the plant should have six 600 MW turbines each and a total capacity of 3,600 MW (the equivalent of three nuclear power plants), producing over 17 billion kWh of electricity, doubling the country’s energy production and contributing to reduce the energy shortage that Dušanbe suffers during the winter months³⁶. In this way, Tajikistan would become a potential exporter of electricity for the neighbouring countries, acting as a base for a regional energy market going

29 “Putin: Permanent friendship treaty with Mongolia to take relations to new level”, *TASS*, 02/09/2019 (<https://tass.com/politics/1075968>).

30 “Putin signs indefinite Treaty on Friendship with Mongolia”, *TASS*, 03/09/2019 (<https://tass.com/politics/1076147>).

31 “Mongolia, Russia lift ties to comprehensive strategic partnership”, *Xinhua*, 03/09/2019 (http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/03/c_138362487.htm).

32 “Russian, Mongolian troops employ new tactic in Selenga-2019 joint drills”, *TASS*, 22/08/2019 (<https://tass.com/defense/1074574>).

33 Idrees Ali, “With an eye on Russia, China and a horse, Pentagon chief visits Mongolia”, *Reuters*, 08/08/2019 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-mongolia/with-an-eye-on-russia-china-and-a-horse-pentagon-chief-visits-mongolia-idUSKCN1UX2HP>); Bolor Lkhaajav, “US Becomes Mongolia’s 5th Strategic Partner”, *The Diplomat*, 05/08/2019 (<https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/us-becomes-mongolias-5th-strategic-partner/>).

34 “Mongolia’s agreement with US will not affect relations with Moscow, Beijing — expert”, *TASS*, 03/08/2019 (<https://tass.com/world/1071751>).

35 “Tajikistan: Roghun inches forward, but money is scarce”, *EurasiaNet*, 09/09/2019 (<https://eurasianet.org/tajikistan-roghun-inches-forward-but-money-is-scarce>).

36 “Tajikistan strives to become regional electricity exporter”, *Trend News Agency*, 11/09/2019 (<https://en.trend.az/casia/tajikistan/3116920.html>).

from Central Asia to East and South Asia, as called for by the World Bank. The latter, while not directly financing the work, subsidized in 2014 the *Rogun Assessment Studies*, which positively evaluate a similar path³⁷. The project, for a total of \$ 3.9 billion, is the result of the agreement between the Italian Salini Impregilo and the OJSC Rogun Hydropower Project, a company controlled by the Tajik government, which coordinates the construction of the work³⁸. The Tajik government expects that, once the plant comes into full operation – all the turbines should be operational by 2028, despite the fact that the overall project is currently scheduled for 2033 – the plant will be able to generate \$ 800 million in annual revenues³⁹.

- **Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan exchange parts of territory at the border**

In September, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan agreed on an exchange of parts of their territory on the border, aimed at facilitating the process of delimiting the border between the two states. In the operation, Bishkek will cede an area of over four square kilometres that includes the Kerkidan reservoir, receiving in exchange an equivalent piece of land near the Kyrgyz village of Gulbaar, in the district of Aravan (Osh region)⁴⁰.

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan share a border of 1,387 km, 85% of which has been delimited. In August 2018, the two states had mutually accepted a further exchange of territories on the border⁴¹. Talks on the delimitation of the shared border started and continued with some frequency in 2017, after the death of the then Uzbek president Islam Karimov and after more than 15 years of stalemate. In September 2017, the then Kyrgyz president, Almazbek Atambayev, met his Uzbek counterpart, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in Bishkek and signed an agreement which formalized the demarcation of 1,170 km of shared border (80% of the total). This was aimed at avoiding the recurrence of periodic tensions on the border, which re-awoke on 10 September with clashes near the village of Kerkidan between the Uzbek border guards and some Kyrgyz residents protesting against Uzbek initiatives aimed at enclosing a water tank. The bilateral agreement states that the entire area facing the reservoir will belong to Uzbekistan, while residents of the Kyrgyz village of Kerkidan will have access to water directly from the river that flows through the reservoir⁴².

37 "Rogun Hydropower Plant Launching Ceremony in Tajikistan", *World Bank*, 16/11/2018 (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2018/11/16/rogun-hpp-launching-ceremony-in-tajikistan>).

38 "Rogun Hydropower Project", Salini Impregilo S.p.A. (<https://www.salini-impregilo.com/en/projects/in-progress/rogun-dam.html>).

39 "Tajikistan: Roghun inches forward, but money is scarce", op. cit.

40 Nurjamal Djanibekova, "Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan exchange land in historic settlement", *EurasiaNet*, 12/09/2019 (<https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-exchange-land-in-historic-settlement>).

41 "Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan agree to swap land on border", *Interfax*, 14/08/2018 (<http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?pg=8&id=850523>).

42 "Land exchange between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan confirmed", *Trend News Agency*, 12/09/2019 (<https://en.trend.az/casia/uzbekistan/3117583.html>).

China-Russia: the fragile alliance that scares Europe

To what extent is it possible to speak about a strategic partnership between China and Russia? Certainly this alliance, assuming that we can actually talk about an alliance, has no historical roots: Moscow and Beijing were allies for a short period after the Second World War, when the newly formed People's Republic of China remained almost completely isolated on the international chessboard, but their bond has always been very unbalanced towards USSR, until it was finally dissolved in 1969.

Since then the relationship between Russia and China has become increasingly pragmatic: the two countries have cooperated when they could not avoid it or when it was actually convenient for both to cooperate, and they moved away whenever they realized they had divergent interests. After Russia, in early 2014, decided to annex the territory of Crimea, everything has changed¹. Moscow has remained isolated and Beijing decided to take advantage of the situation by offering to help at his own conditions, which is by taking the lead in a new unbalanced relationship that is hard to accept for Russia.

After just a couple of years, China is already able to dominate every aspect of this new partnership. Its economy is six times larger (with the same purchasing power) than the one of Russia. Moscow is the tenth reference market for Chinese exports, just above the Philippines, while for Russia China is the second main market, after the European Union, especially thanks to oil imports. In general, the political and strategic weight of the People's Republic is growing, while that of Russia is decreasing². As far as Moscow is concerned, while putting pressure on the West to force it to ease the sanctions initially seemed a winning strategy, now had become a trap from which it is more and more difficult to escape. Russia seems having lost all hope of remaining an equal partner with China, although it not yet clear is to what extent this dependence on the East can influence its political, economic and strategic choices.

The realignment between Moscow and Beijing became evident in May 2014, when Vladimir Putin flew to Shanghai accompanied by a large delegation of entrepreneurs and managed to sign a thirty-year agreement to export to China oil for 400 billion dollars. Moscow oil should arrive in Beijing through the "Power of Siberia" pipeline, which is supposed to become operational towards the end of the year³. About half of the machinery and technologies that Russian companies use for their mining plants are imported from China. At the same time, Moscow and Beijing have started discussing about the enhancement of military cooperation and about the opportunity to improve the connectivity of the north-west routes to facilitate the interchange of natural gas (LNG).

For several years, China and Russia have begun to develop what observers call an "anti-dollar strategy", aimed at limiting the use of the US currency in the interchange between the two countries to favour the ruble and the yuan⁴. Today more than ever, Moscow and Beijing are under

1 "Russia and China. Partnership is much better for China than it is for Russia. Just how much better might not become clear for a few years yet", *The Economist*, 27 July 2019, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/07/27/partnership-is-much-better-for-china-than-it-is-for-russia>

2 It is interesting to recall that only in 1989 the capacity Russian economy was 100% higher than the one of China.

3 Zhao Runhua e Huang Kaixi, "Russia-to-China 'Power of Siberia' Pipeline to Open in 2019", *Caixin Global News*, 8 March 2019, <https://www.caixinglobal.com/2019-03-08/russia-to-china-power-of-siberia-pipeline-to-open-in-2019-101389328.html>

4 It is important to remember that it is not the first time that Russia and China have tried to agree on ruble-yuan exchange agreement, and that all previous attempts have failed. Karen Yeung, "Why China and Russia are struggling to abandon the US dollar and forge a yuan-ruble deal", *South China Morning Post*, 15 January 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/2182192/why-china-and-russia-are-struggling-abandon-us-dollar-and>

pressure because of the trade sanctions Washington has imposed on them, hence the need to try to reduce the use of US dollars on their respective economies. The Russian Central Bank currently holds 14 percent of its currency reserves in yuan. A quota three times higher than any other central bank. From a long-term perspective, although this reflection has not yet been officialised, the new system that Moscow and Beijing are trying to create can grow and become a real alternative to the dollar system for other nations, starting from those that are already well connected to Moscow and Beijing. If it is true that Russia and China are now trying to impose their national currencies on a regional or international scale, this new attitude does not imply that they are achieving their desired results⁵.

Another area in which Russia is increasingly dependent on China is technology. Huawei has been commissioned to take care of the improvement of the Russian 5G network, and Moscow uses Chinese technologies and methods to control its computer network and all those who use it. Similarly to what is happening in Central Asia and Southeast Asia, the fear that this technological dependence on China could give Beijing a privileged access on sensitive information is real, but the absence of valid alternatives and the inability to fill an already enormous technological gap at home eliminate all possibilities to limit this emerging collaboration.

Beijing's renewed interest in Central Asia also deserves some explanations. China established its first ties with this region back in 1996, when the heads of state of Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia signed a treaty to strengthen military support in the region. The "Shanghai Group" or "Group of Five" was born. In 2001, in Shanghai, the same five countries invited Uzbekistan to join their group and agreed to establish a more structured regional organization: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). At first Russia welcomed China as a country capable, on the one hand, of accepting its political and strategic supremacy in an area easily recognizable as Moscow own backyard, and, on the other hand, of contributing to its development focusing on the deepening of investments and economic interchange. However, through time Moscow realized that Beijing's interest in Central Asia has always had a strategic rather than an economic nature. Today this trend is clearer than ever, even as far as non-SCO countries are concerned⁶.

Tajikistan is the nation that to date has benefited the most from Chinese "generosity". Less fortunate than its neighbours in terms of natural resources availability, Tajikistan is the poorest state in the region, where Beijing has so far invested 1.3 billion dollars to build roads, bridges, schools and government buildings. Half of the national public debt depends on loans received from Beijing, and China's presence is very strong presence in the mining sector, in the production and distribution of energy, in media and security.

Besides Tajikistan, China has always been very interested in Kazakhstan. The reason is simple: these two countries share their borders with the autonomous region of Xinjiang, so their collaboration is essential not only to continue advancing the New Silk Road project, but also to

5 A study carried out by economists Ethan Ilzetzki of the London School of Economics and Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff of Harvard University showed that, until 2015, 62 percent of world countries were linked to the dollar and about the same percentage of developing countries was borrowing dollars. At the same time, less than 30 percent of nations used the euro to keep their exchange rates stable and only 13 percent of developing countries borrowed euros in significant quantities. British pound and Chinese yuan appear more and more rarely in international statistics. Ethan Ilzetzki, Carmen Reinhart, Kenneth Rogoff, "Exchange Arrangements entering the 21st Century: Which Anchor will hold?", *NBER Working Paper Series*, Working Paper 23134, Cambridge, National Bureau of Economic Research, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w23134>

6 "The junior partner. How Vladimir Putin's embrace of China weakens Russia. He needs Xi Jinping more than Mr Xi needs him—and Central Asia is changing as a result", *The Economist*, 25 July 2019, <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2019/07/25/how-vladimir-putins-embrace-of-china-weakens-russia>

create a solid security cordon around an area where Beijing has decided to suppress any autonomous political and cultural aspiration⁷, by resorting to the use of forced internment camps.

Since China started resuming relations with Central Asian countries, transforming them from economic partnerships into strategic alliances, Russia's influence in the region started deteriorating. Moscow began to worry when, at the beginning of 2016, some operational units of the People's Liberation Army arrived in Tajikistan, officially to help controlling movements all along the Wakhan Corridor, the portion of Afghanistan that separates Tajikistan from Pakistan, but then they remained stationing in the country. Actually, from 2016 joint military exercises and China-led training programs for local troops have become the norm, even though China is trying its best to defuse the attention on its military presence in the region⁸.

Beijing is trying to maintain a low profile also to avoid furthering annoying Moscow, as the country is currently unable to respond to a raising Chinese threat in the region. As noted by Raffaello Pantucci, a researcher of the London-based Royal United Services Institute, noted, China is redesigning the historical balance of power in Central Asia: "once upon a time we used to say that all roads led to Moscow. Now they all go to Beijing"⁹.

Analysis, assessments and forecasts

What are the objectives and which is the potential of this alliance, and what are the consequences for Europe? From the Chinese point of view, the main objective is to ensure that feeling reassured on the Eastern front, Russia will keep a neutral, if not friendly, posture in the China-United States confrontation. Beijing is not interested in weakening Moscow, as this will not be functional to the maintenance of stability in Central Asia. At the same time, Beijing does not want to see Moscow becoming stronger. Accordingly, the country wants to create a strong partnership, securing a dominant position in it. China as therefore strengthened investments, increased oil and armaments imports, and supported, whenever possible, the Russian line within the United Nations Security Council. At the same time, China is also trying to avoid been perceived as too pro-Russia. Indeed, despite having chosen not to criticize the annexation of Crimea, China has not officially recognized it¹⁰. The Chinese Communist Party is pragmatic: the invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea have eliminated any opportunity for a realignment between Russia and the United States, and it is China's interest to avoid them to solve this impasse¹¹. In addition, the Ukrainian crisis has been useful in turning the attention of the West elsewhere, and has created a situation that has led Moscow to lean more and more on Beijing.

From the Russian perspective, the isolation to which the West relegated it pushed the country to look for new allies in the East. Even though the Kremlin is aware that the Moscow-Beijing axis is unbalanced towards the latter, it has to accept it as it has no available alternatives for now. However, by investing in strategic collaborations, which are creating new constraints for Beijing as well, such as exchange of energy resources, armaments, and internationalization of the yuan, Moscow is relatively reducing its dependence from its neighbour.

European observers have a completely different understanding of the realignment between China and Russia. Many consider it an alliance with no future for at least two reasons. On the one hand, the deepening of bilateral dependency will lead Russia to take a step back, to avoid finding

7 John Sudworth, "Searching for truth in China's Uighur 're-education' camps", *BBC*, 21 June 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-china-blog-48700786>

8 Stephen Blank, "Sino-Tajik Exercises: The Latest Chinese Encroachment Into Russia's 'Sphere of Influence'", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 16, N. 107, 25 July 2019, <https://jamestown.org/program/sino-tajik-exercises-the-latest-chinese-encroachment-into-russias-sphere-of-influence/>

9 "The junior partner", *The Economist*, *op. cit.*

10 Shannon Tiezzi, "China Reacts to the Crimea Referendum", *The Diplomat*, 18 March 2014, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/03/china-reacts-to-the-crimea-referendum/>

11 "The junior partner", *The Economist*, *op. cit.*

itself too tied to Beijing's interests and priorities. On the other hand, a change of government could bring Russia closer to the West. Alexei Navalny, the most famous Russian dissident and Vladimir Putin political adversary agrees with this second explanation. He believes that "Putin's choices will make the next Russian leader a hostage to Chinese politics, as it will soon become too difficult for anyone to restructure the alliance by turning it into something useful and fruitful both for Russia and its people"¹². At the same time, it is not certain that Moscow will be able to find an alternative to Beijing, and therefore it could be forced to continue to consider economic dependence from China as inevitable. In addition, it is debatable that a major change in Russian leadership will create the conditions for a realignment with the West or a rapprochement with the United States.

Yet, as highlighted in "Russia and China. Anatomy of a Partnership", a report published by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), the Russia-China bloc, regardless of its pragmatic, asymmetrical, and potentially conflicting nature, is not destined to disappear. Accordingly, it would be advisable to start a debate on how to prevent it from becoming an aggregator of anti-western dissent¹³.

The Russia-China partnership is problematic for the EU for three reasons:

- 1) Although Moscow and Beijing have not launched any joint campaign to promote authoritarian governance beyond national borders, their alliance offers a real alternative for countries that are not particularly convinced by the validity of the West-supported model of liberal democracy. The block that will be able to prove to be more efficient and dynamic will most likely prevail.
- 2) To counterbalance the Russian-Chinese axis in a more credible and coherent way, Europe should show itself as a more united block, both in contrasting the consolidation of this alliance and in proposing a valid alternative to the states that could find themselves attracted by it.
- 3) Finally, Europe should try to become more active and seek more opportunities for dialogue, without limiting it to economic issues, rather embracing, among others, also financial and security issues. Although it is possible that by trying to engage China in a dialogue on any of these issues Europe will end up being embedded in extenuating and possibly unfruitful discussion, Bruxelles cannot miss the chance to try to redefine, with the support of Beijing, an international system that could be accepted by both of them. Also, because the only possible alternative is engaging in a fight to hinder China's attempt to impose its standards unilaterally.

If it is true, as the American academic Jeremi Suri pointed out, that it has been the need to challenge the American order to bring Moscow and Beijing closer, it is evident that as long as the United States continues to be perceived as a common enemy, the asymmetry in this alliance will continue to be perceived as a secondary problem for the Kremlin¹⁴. Paradoxically, to offer Russia an alternative, the West in general and the European Union in particular should launch a new productive dialogue to find a way to prevent the isolation to which they have relegated Moscow from becoming a double-edged sword transforming Russia into an even more unpredictable and dangerous enemy.

12 "The junior partner", *The Economist*, *op. cit.*

13 Aldo Ferrari e Eleonora Tafuro Ambrosetti, "Russia and China. Anatomy of a Partnership", Ledizioni LediPublishing, Milano, May 2019, p. 133.

14 Jeremi Suri, "American Pressure Against Revisionist Russia and China", *ISPI Commentary*, 21 December 2018, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/american-pressure-against-revisionist-russia-and-china-21830>.

Different twins: the political systems of Argentina and Uruguay tested by primary elections

It was 1997 and in Uruguay a constitutional reform was ratified: this introduced the obligation to hold internal elections for political parties (or coalitions of parties) for the selection of candidates for national and local executive bodies (provincial and municipal). They were an open and simultaneous primary elections in which all political movements (intending to participate in subsequent elections) had the obligation to take part. Just over ten years later, in 2009, the Uruguayan legislation in terms of selection of the ruling class, *mutatis mutandis*, became the basis for the development of the Argentine legislation. PASO (Primarias Abiertas Simultaneas Obligatorias) were introduced as a form of selection of national and local political candidates¹.

The urns of the primaries in Uruguay and Argentina, which for the first time were held only a few weeks apart, have not been closed long. Primary that gave completely different results reflecting the traits of two intimately different political systems. Although geographical proximity has facilitated interactions and cultural exchanges between the two countries, the political sphere today does not seem to strengthen these connections: so homologation effects produced are very minimal.

The candidates

On June 30, the primaries were held in Uruguay to select candidates for the presidential elections to be held on October 27th. The main political forces presented multiple pre-candidates. The Frente Amplio, which at the moment expresses the Presidency with Tabaré R. Vázquez, is a great coalition in which they take part from the Movimiento de Participación Popular (MPP) to the Socialist Party passing through the Christian Democratic Party, the Communist Party and other minor movements. These different souls have found expression in the primaries for the presidential elections: the MRP nominated Carolina Cosse - formerly Minister of Industry during most of the Vázquez presidential period; Daniel Martínez, who until a few months ago was the mayor of the capital Montevideo, was nominated by the Socialist Party; the Communist Party, on the other hand, has supported Oscar Andrade, a union leader. The Partido Nacional (National Party), the main opposition movement to the *frenteamplista* presidency, with a clear nationalist and liberal inclination, also presented different candidates: Luis Lacalle Pou, a member of a family historically belonging to the *herrerista* faction of the national party, had already been a candidate for the same party for the presidential election in 2014 and is currently a senator; Jorge Larrañaga, already a candidate in the 2004 presidential election, represented the Wilsonian current of the national party; then there was an outsider candidate, who had recently entered politics, Juan Sartori. Finally, in the ranks of the Colorado party (a movement that has inspired Uruguayan political life since the first half of the nineteenth century, with secular and republican positions), three pre-candidates have received almost all the votes: Ernesto Talvi, who for many years directed the Ceres research center (Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Económica y Social), a Center that always staying close to the positions of the partido colorado; Julio M. Sanguinetti, historical leader of the party, deputy since the sixties and first democratically elected president after the end of the military dictatorship;

1 F. Freidenberg, *Selección de candidatos y democracia interna en los partidos de América Latina*, Lima, International IDEA, 2003; M. Alcántara Sáez, M.L. Tagina (eds.), *Elecciones y Cambio de élites*, Salamanca, Aquilafuente – Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2016.

José Amorín Batlle, former Minister of Education and several times national representative for the colorado party (first as a deputy, then as a senator)².

The situation that occurred in the primary elections in Argentina on August 11 was different. The main political movements and electoral alliances presented only one candidate for the presidential ticket. The "Juntos por el cambio" coalition has nominated the incumbent President, Mauricio Macri, and as Vice, Miguel Ángel Pichetto (historical Peronist leader with a very long parliamentary *cursus honorum*). The "Frente de Todos", gathering a good part of the Peronist opposition to the presidency of Macri, presented the presidential ticket Fernández (Alberto) - Fernández (Cristina): the former had been head of the President of the Republic's cabinet in the years between 2003 and 2008, under the presidencies of Nestor Kirchner and his wife, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, currently a vice presidential candidate. The latter had already served as President for two mandates (and first lady of former President Nestor Kirchner). The "Consenso Federal" alliance presented Roberto Lavagna's candidacy for the Presidency, the Minister of the Economy who brought Argentina out of the shackles of the 2001 crisis and remained in office from April 2002 to November 2005. Lavagna is accompanied by the candidacy for the Vice-Presidency of Juan Manuel Urtubey, a former national deputy and for more than ten years governor of the province of Salta³.

At the same time, the Argentine primary elections also was fought in three regional realities of absolute national importance. Even in these cases, each party (or alliance of parties) presented only one candidate. The first of these is the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires where the "Juntos por el cambio" coalition presented the current mayor Horacio Rodríguez Larreta. While the "Frente de Todos" alliance nominated Matías Lammens, the "Consenso Federal" – alliance tightened around Matías Tombolini. Then there is the province of Buenos Aires, where Axel Kicillof (former Minister of Argentine economy and national deputy) of the «Frente de Todos» and Eduardo Bucca of «Consenso Federal» will challenge the current governor, Maria Eugenia Vidal (candidate for «Juntos por el cambio»). Catamarca, a province in the north-west of Argentina, is the last region in question where Raúl Jalil ("Frente de Todos"), Roberto Gómez ("Juntos por el cambio") and Hugo Ávila ("Federal Consensus") are candidates.

The results

Once the seats were closed, the polls were opened, the results showed the features of two very different political realities but with some elements in common. In the first place, the results show a great decline in the consensus towards government majorities: in Argentina, President Mauricio Macri and his coalition suffered a strong defeat. Although the main polls released in the weeks leading up to the primary elections showed a limited distance between the Macri coalition and the "Frente de Todos", the votes marked a severe decree: Macri, in fact, stopped at 31.8% of the votes (gathering just over 8 million votes), while Alberto Fernández touched almost 48% of the votes in percentage terms (12.2 million) and Roberto Lavagna has slightly exceeded 8% (which represents 2 million votes)⁴. A result, in some respects, also replicated in the region of Catamarca and Buenos Aires; in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, on the other hand, Horacio Rodríguez Larreta achieved an important success on the "Frente de Todos" candidate⁵.

2 For an exhaustive analysis of political party system in Uruguay, see: N. Fernández, H. Machín, *Una democracia única. Historia de los partidos políticos y las elecciones del Uruguay*, Montevideo, Editorial Fin de Siglo, 2017.

3 For an exhaustive analysis of political party system in Argentina, see: A. Malamud, M.A. De Luca, *La política en tiempos de los Kirchner*, Buenos Aires, Eudeba, 2015.

4 Cámara Nacional Electoral, *Resultados – Presidente y Vicepresidente de la Nación*, 11/08/2019 [available on line at https://www.electoral.gob.ar/nuevo/paginas/pdf/AE_61_19.pdf, last access 30/09/2019].

5 *Resultados Paso provincia por provincia y total País*, in «Infoabae» [available on line at <https://www.infoabae.com/resultados-paso-2019-provincia-por-provincia-total-pais/>, last access 30/09/2019]. As for the

Also in Uruguay, the Frente Amplio collected just 22.62% of the votes, compared to the Partido Colorado which stopped at 12.84% and the Partido Nacional which won the elections by not reaching 40% of the votes. Within each political group, there was a clear majority achieved by only one candidate. The mayor of Montevideo, Daniel Martínez, has almost doubled, with 42% of valid votes for the Frente Amplio, the consensus of his two adversaries, Cosse and Andrade. With 53.71% of the preferences collected by the Partido Nacional, Luis Lacalle Pou clearly won Sartori and Larrañaga. Even Ernesto Talvi far exceeded 50% of the votes of the Partido Colorado, beating the competition of Sanguinetti and Amorín Batlle⁶.

A second trait in common between the two Rioplatenses political realities is the so-called "dedazo". This is a practice found in much of Latin America Countries (since the nineteenth century) which involves a sort of indication (direct or indirect) of the future President (or candidate President) by the current President. On closer inspection, in both cases, there was no form of "dedazo" comparable with that which occurred, for example in Mexico in the second half of the twentieth century, or during the time of the Orden Conservador in Argentina at the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th centuries. It was a different form both in Argentina and in Uruguay. In the first case, former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, considered by many the main opposition candidate against President Macri, has decided to take a step to the side of the political dispute by running for the Vice-presidency and clarifying, in a long video released from their social media, "I asked Alberto Fernández to lead the presidential formula of which I will also be a part"⁷. In this sense, a peculiarity emerged for which the vice-presidential candidate nominated the presidential candidate, although Cristina Fernández was no longer the President of Argentina. The "dedazo" in the coalition of the Frente Amplio in Uruguay is very peculiar. Although the current president has never publicly expressed himself in favor of a candidate, Daniel Martínez comes from the ranks of the same party of Vázquez, the Uruguayan Socialist Party. At the same time, Martínez was one of the prominent figures during the first Presidency of Vázquez (2005-2010), first as president of Ancap (authority that governs the hydrocarbons in Uruguay) and then as Minister of Industry and Energy. And not only. Martínez and Vázquez, in fact, share a part of their peculiar *cursus honorum* and, therefore, of their political capital. Both, in fact, were mayors of the city of Montevideo, where the Frente Amplio has one of its main electoral strongholds.

There is a fundamental difference that has jumped into the eyes of all political commentators. While on the one hand the Uruguayan primary elections were competitive and allowed all political forces to choose their candidates, the Argentine ones had a different meaning. The presence of only one candidate for political space has, in fact, affected the purpose. The primaries, in fact, have become a sort of big survey which the Argentines have the obligation to take part in.

Towards the conclusion

The Argentine political analyst, Rosendo Fraga, in the aftermath of the primaries held in his country wrote: "the primaries really did not define anything, because of the ten presidential tickets that presented themselves, in no case there was competition. Nevertheless, the primaries seem to have defined everything"⁸. In fact, their results have revealed the critical nature of Argentina in more than one issue.

City of Buenos Aires, it should not be forgotten that this was historically governed by an anti-Peronist political figures (except for some small periods).

6 This data are available on the webpage of Corte Electoral de la República Oriental del Uruguay, <https://eleccionesinternas.corteelectoral.gub.uy/inicio.htm>, last access 30/09/2019.

7 For the complete text and the complete video of this declaration, see: *El video y el texto completo con los que Cristina anunció su candidatura a vicepresidenta*, in «Clarín», 18/05/2019 [available on line at https://www.clarin.com/politica/video-cristina-anuncio-candidatura_0_zj-1ti1Zp.html, last access 30/09/2019].

8 R. Fraga, *Resultado de las PASO: entre la sorpresa y la lógica*, in «Clarín», 13/08/2019 [available on line at https://www.clarin.com/opinion/resultado-paso-sorpresa-logica_0_FGlsY8wQt.html, last access 30/09/2019].

From the political point of view, the primaries have one and only one winner, the "Frente de Todos". Hardly, according to electoral data, Macri and his coalition «Juntos por el cambio» will succeed in subverting the flows of consensus. At the same time, the primaries showed the features of an extremely fluid political system (historically considered stable, with strong political movements). Although they have very deep cultural roots in Argentine political history, all the major political movements are relatively young because they are the result of a (still ongoing) reconfiguration of the Argentine political system - a reconfiguration started after the 2001 crisis. Finally, there is a manichean polarization of the political debate. Macri and the Fernández together collect 80% of the valid votes of the last elections.

From an economic point of view, the results of the primaries have sent a too weak system out of tune. On 12 August, national and international markets reacted by losing value to the Argentine currency, the weight, in relation to the main international currencies. This is accompanied by an increase in country risk and the perplexities on the repayment plan of international loans have become stronger⁹.

From a social point of view, finally, the worries and difficulties of all the most important survey institutes that had not foreseen such a victory for the "Frente de Todos" emerged clearly. And it was precisely the failure to foresee to heighten the sense of uncertainty that does not help an already very complicated economic and political situation.

Totally different is the area that is perceived in Uruguay where the primaries corroborated the idea that there are strong and well-rooted political movements in society. In this sense, one can read the experience of the Otusider Juan Sartori, who failed to win the candidacy for the Presidency for the Partido Nacional, candidature remained in the hands of a member of long political militancy. And it is caused by the stability of political reality that the markets have not experienced any major upheavals (apart from those arriving from neighbouring Argentina). And it is precisely for this reason that, in Uruguay, the aims of the primaries remained consistent with their results.

9 *Wall Street comienza a preguntarse si Argentina podrá evitar el default*, in «Infobae», 14/08/2019 [available on line at <https://www.infobae.com/economia/2019/08/14/tras-la-devaluacion-argentina-se-encamina-al-default-pero-aun-puede-evitarse/>, last access 30/09/2019].

Are the ways of corruption infinite?

In recent weeks, in Peru, a strong institutional clash is underway that shows the contrast between the legislative power and the executive power. A clash of a purely political nature with very deep roots. The general elections of April-June 2016 had returned the image of a deeply divided country: in the balloting for the presidential elections, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski had overcome by a very few votes (just over 40 thousand preferences) Keiko Fujimori; in Parliament, however, the majority was in the hands of Fujimori's party, Fuerza Popular, with 73 out of 130 parliamentarians. In March 2018, then, the President of the Republic Kuczynski submitted his resignation due to investigations into an alleged money laundering connected to the Brazilian scandal *Lava Jato*. The presidential powers, therefore, passed into the hands of the Vice President, Martín Vizcarra. The alleged facts concerned the 2004-2006 period, when Kuczynski was a member of the Ministry of the Economy and Finance (first) and (then) held the office of President of the Council of Ministers. The attempt to remove Kuczynski from power was pleaded especially by the Fuerza Popular movement. Nevertheless, among the main leaders of Fuerza Popular there are the Fujimori brothers (sons of the former President of Peru Alberto Fujimori), Keiko and Kenji, both investigated for corruption. In a scenario like this, the political confrontation is far from being diminished¹.

In fact, in recent weeks the contenders have returned to show their muscles. On the one hand, the parliamentary majority has tried to challenge the executive power by promoting names for the Constitutional Tribunal very close to Fuerza Popular and the Aprista Party (another opposition party that challenged President Vizcarra). As one can read on the columns of the Spanish newspaper "El País", quoting the words of the former member of the Constitutional Tribunal, César Landa, "the Fuerza Popular and Partido Aprista movements are using the [Court] Constitutional with the aim of hindering the anti processes -corruption ", referring to the investigations concerning the Fujimori brothers². And then, President Vizcarra announced the dissolution of the Parliament (considering the selection of the candidates of the Constitutional Court, unable to guarantee the division of powers), and, on the other hand, the latter approved a suspension for 12 months of Vizcarra from the its functions (the Constitution provides for the possibility of suspending the Presidency - at the hands of the legislative power - following a manifested and "permanent moral or physical incapacity"³. The power, according to the Parliament decision, passed into the hands of Vice President Mercedes Aráoz, which quickly has renounced his office and, therefore, the powers conferred by the Parliament.

What emerges from the Peruvian affair, which will surely evolve soon, is that corruption seems to cross much of the Latin American political class. A question that has been central to Latin American public opinion for a long time, as shown by the surveys released periodically by organizations such as the American Lapop (Latin American Public Opinion) of Vanderbilt University or the Chilean LatinoBarometro. The latter, for example, in its latest annual report, indicated that a

1 *Kuczynski anuncia oficialmente su renuncia por 'clima de ingobernabilidad'*, in «El Comercio», 21/03/2018 [available on line at <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/pedropablokuczynski-renuncia-presidencia-peru-ingobernabilidad.html>], last access 1/10/2019].

2 J. Fowks, *La oposición peruana maniobra para hacerse con el control del Constitucional*, in «El País», 27/09/2019 [available on line at https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/09/27/america/1569536310_845114.html], last access 1/10/2019].

3 *Disolución del Congreso en Perú: 4 claves para entender el enfrentamiento entre Vizcarra y el Parlamento (y lo que puede pasar ahora)*, in «BBCMundo», 2/10/2019 [available on line at <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-49887706>], last access 3/10/2019].

large part of Latin American public opinion (including the public opinion of the larger countries such as Brazil and Mexico, without obviously neglecting the aforementioned Perú), thinks that corruption represents one of the most important problems for its own State⁴. A perception, the latter, corroborated by the scandals that have emerged in the recent history of Latin America. Among these, the corruptions that has created a huge stir in recent years has been the Odebrecht case in Brazil - the central case of the *Lava Jato* investigative operation. The *longa manus* of the Brazilian company Odebrecht has reached eleven Latin American countries and has come to have illegal commissions up to Africa, Angola and Mozambique. According to investigations by the US Department of Justice, as the magazine *América Economía* reveals, "Odebrecht paid about 788 million dollars in illegal commissions for more than a hundred public construction projects"⁵. This case particularly affected the Latin American public opinion due to geographical extension, volume of corruption and, in the last period, because it led the company to declare bankruptcy first in Brazil and, later, in the United States⁶. A case that has questioned practically the whole Latin American political class, bringing it to the dock, initially media and political and, only in the second instance, judiciary. A shame that not everyone has endured: the former Peruvian President, Alan García, who was President of Peru for two terms (1985-1990, 2006-2011), took his life just before being transferred to prison precisely during the international investigation into corruption linked to the Odebrecht case⁷.

Odebrecht's is not the only case of corruption in Latin America that has been put in the spotlight in recent years. In Argentina, the corruption cases for the Vialidad case directed the accusations against the former President (currently candidate for the Vice Presidency) Cristina Fernández de Kirchner for alleged fraud in public infrastructure works⁸. An critical situation not so dissimilar is that of Cristina Kirchner's political opponent, the President of Argentina (currently candidate for the Presidency), Mauricio Macri, already touched but then acquitted by the 'Panama Papers' case in Argentina, which in recent years has received several attacks for the 'Correo Argentino' cause involving his family's business⁹.

Even Chile, one of the most economically and politically stable countries in the area, is not exempt from corruption scandals. These have shed a new light a system of murky connections between public affairs managers and private companies. From the Pentagate (which brought some important political figures to jail) to the more recent Sqm case (which uncovered illegitimate financing for the electoral political movements of the center-left by the company of the son-in-law of Gen. Augusto Pinochet), in Chile the political class is increasingly being questioned¹⁰.

4 Corporación Latinobarómetro, *Informe 2018*, Santiago de Chile, Noviembre 2018, pp. 58-61 [available on line at <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latNewsShow.jsp>, last access 3/10/2019].

5 *Conozca la cadena de corrupción de Odebrecht y los casos más destacados en América Latina*, in «América Economía», 20/11/2018 [available on line at <https://www.americaeconomia.com/politica-sociedad/politica/conozca-la-cadena-de-corrupcion-de-odebrecht-y-los-casos-mas-destacado-en>, , last access 3/10/2019].

6 *En medio de los escándalos de corrupción, Odebrecht se declaró en quiebra*, in «Perfil», 18/06/2019 [available on line at <https://www.perfil.com/noticias/internacional/corrupcion-odebrecht-se-declaro-quiebra%20.phtml>, last access 3/10/2019].

7 J. Fowks, *Muere el expresidente peruano Alan García tras pegarse un tiro cuando iba a ser detenido*, in «El País», 19/04/2019 [available on line at https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/04/17/actualidad/1555505137_764885.html, last access 3/10/2019].

8 On this topic, see the last declarations: *Vialidad: arrancaron las indagatorias en juicio contra Cristina*, in «Ámbito», 9/09/2019 [available on line at <https://www.ambito.com/vialidad-arrancaron-las-indagatorias-juicio-contra-cristina-n5053495>, last access 3/10/2019].

9 Cfr. S. Dapelo, *La justicia despegó a Mauricio Macri de los Panamá Papers*, in «La Nación», 20/09/2017 [available on line at <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/politica/la-justicia-despego-a-mauricio-macri-de-los-panama-papers-nid2064793>, last access 3/10/2019]; E. Delfino, *Correo: la empresa de los Macri aclaró cuanto le pagaría al Estado*, in «Perfil», 24/08/2019 [available on line at <https://www.perfil.com/noticias/politica/correo-la-empresa-de-los-macri-aclaro-cuanto-le-pagaria-al-estado.phtml>, last access 3/10/2019].

10 *Diez años de CNN Chile: Los casos de corrupción que han sacudido al país*, in *CnnCHile*, 6/12/2018 [available on line at https://www.cnnchile.com/pais/10-anos-de-cnn-chile-los-casos-de-corrupcion-que-han-sacudido-al-pais_20181206/, last access 3/10/2019].

The cases of Peru, Brazil, Argentina and Chile exposed so far show the spread of corruption. And not only. Recent polls reveal a growing concern about these issues among Latin American public opinions. This perception is corroborated by the recent analyzes made public by the international organization based in Germany, Transparency International (TI): last September 23rd the «Global Corruption Barometer 2019» was published, which analyzes data collected in January / February 2019. TI intended to analyze corruption not only in terms of economic but also in terms of depriving people of their "human rights and dignity, such as when citizens are forced to offer sexual favors in exchange for public services [...] - a practice known as sexual extortion or 'sextortion'». More than half of the surveyed think that corruption has increased during 2018 (the values are between the percentage collected between in Venezuelan, 87%, and 37% interviewed in Barbados). Percentages jump, on a regional basis, when respondents are asked to judge government corruption: 85% believe that corruption represents a big problem for their country. A data, the latter, which should be read in consideration of the fact that 57% of Latin American citizens believe that their government is doing a bad job in the fight against corruption. The use of corrupt practices by the political world, then, increases with the approach of the elections with the use of "fraudulent"¹¹ funds for political parties, purchase of votes or the development of fake news during the electoral campaign"¹².

This perception, however, is in contrast with what has been declared several times by the ruling classes of the Latin American Countries. In April 2018, in fact, at the Eighth Summit of the Americas, all the Presidents of the American Countries gathered in Peru, in Lima, where they signed a compromise in favor of a "Democratic Governability in relation to Corruption". Governments have pledged to guarantee the independence of the judiciary, to fight impunity, to promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups in political and social life. Which means, as is clear from the document, strengthening the participation of civil society - understood in the widest possible form - in the fight against corruption by promoting intergovernmental practices to put a brake on the transnational dimension of the phenomenon¹³.

On the basis of what established by the Compromise of Lima in 2018, last July during the annual meeting of the Alliance of the Pacific an intention to elaborate a sort of black list of private companies involved in corrupt practices to what other contracts cannot have public emerged clearly. The Colombian President, Iván Duque, declared that "it is our moral duty that [these companies] receive a social sanction", showing that the hour of "zero tolerance" towards corruption had come¹⁴.

The battle against corruption, however, beyond the declarations (even when corroborated by the solemnity of the occasion, as in the case of the annual Alliance for the Pacific meeting) can only clash with the reality of the facts. The risk, in fact, is that of wasting the optimistic political capital that public opinion still seems to place in the possibility of limiting these practices. The TI report shows that in fact "despite the negative experiences, the [Latin American] citizens are largely optimistic about the future. [...] This positive energy can be channeled by empowering

11 Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer. Latin America & Caribbean 2019. Citizen's views and experiences of corruption*, Berlino, settembre 2019, p. 33 [available on line at https://www.transparency.org/files/content/pages/2019_GCB_LatinAmerica_Caribbean_Full_Report.pdf, last access 3/10/2019].

12 *Ivi*, p. 24.

13 Il testo del Compromiso di Lima «Gobernabilidad Democrática frente a la Corrupción» è disponibile on line alla pagina web <https://www.viicumbreperu.org/compromiso-de-lima-gobernabilidad-democratica-frente-a-la-corrupcion/>, last access 4/10/2019.

14 *Alianza del Pacífico convoca a combatir el proteccionismo y la corrupción*, in «Mercopress», 8/07/2019 [available on line at <https://es.mercopress.com/2019/07/08/alianza-del-pacifico-convoca-a-combatir-el-proteccionismo-y-la-corrupcion>, last access 4/10/2019].

individuals, civil society and the media to spread the news and take part in the fight against corruption"¹⁵. A risk, in some respects, not so unrealistic considering what happened in recent months in Mexico. Last May, President Andrés López Obrador launched the "Institute to Return Stolen Things to the People" to auction off assets confiscated from the world of delinquency, to corrupt politicians and, in general, from criminal activities. The goal was to reach 62.5 million dollars for 2019 to be allocated for the development of the most critical areas (in economic and social terms) of the Country¹⁶. Just a few days ago, however, López Obrador was dissatisfied with the bureaucratic delays that characterized the first months of the program's activities¹⁷.

In short, what emerges is a difficult reality: to eradicate corruption there is a need to start a complicated and virtuous process, inconsistent and not always linear. But it is a challenge to which the Latin American democracies cannot refrain from giving an answer in order to finally put an end to the ways of corruption in the region.

15 Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer. Latin America & Caribbean 2019. Citizen's views and experiences of corruption*, cit., p. 32.

16 D. Brooks, *AMLO: qué es el Instituto para Devolverle al Pueblo lo Robado que instauró el Presidente de México*, 23/05/2019 [available on line at <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-48374340>, last access 4/10/2019].

17 *Reconoce AMLO que dinero de subastas no se ha entregado*, in «W Radio», 6/10/2019 [available on line at http://wradio.com.mx/radio/2019/10/07/nacional/1570402750_612652.html, last access 7/10/2019].

The ASEAN-US maritime exercise: geopolitical implications and security issues

In the early September ASEAN countries and United States were engaged in their first maritime military exercise (AUMX, Asean-US Maritime Exercise), which involved for five days eight warships, four aircrafts and more than a thousand personnel from the US and ten Southeast Asian countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam): these maritime drills started in Thailand, at the Sattahip naval base (located in Chonburi province) and ended in Singapore.

In addition to the military assets provided by the United States - the littoral combat ship USS Montgomery, the guided-missile destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer, three MH-60 helicopters, the P-8 Poseidon aircraft - Thailand, Brunei, Philippines, Singapore and Myanmar participated with their patrol vessels and frigates, while Vietnamese patrols directly reached the place where maritime exercise was held. Even if Malaysia and Indonesia have significant naval forces, these countries only sent observation teams to attend this military exercise, similarly to Laos and Cambodia.¹

These vessels created a joint task force in order to undertake a naval drill in the Vietnam's Cà Mau peninsula (the southernmost part of the Indochina peninsula), aimed at identifying and locating target-vessels that are suspected to be conducting illegal activities, which were later stopped and subjected to search and seizure operations.² Singapore supported these maritime operations making available its Real-time Information-sharing System - which was created in May 2019 by the Navy's Information Fusion Centre operating at Changi Naval Base – which played an important role during the naval exercise, contributing to disseminate rapidly necessary communications to bolster maritime security.³

It is necessary to highlight the inclusive dimension of AUMX, because for the first time all ten ASEAN countries contributed with military assets and troops to this maritime exercise: as a matter of fact, Southeast Asian countries are frequently involved in other multilateral exercises with the United States - such as the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) and Southeast Asia Cooperation Training (Seacat) exercises - but without joining them as regional bloc (for instance, Myanmar joined Seacat exercises only since 2017). Moreover, among ASEAN states only Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia participated at the Pacific Partnership Mission - the largest annual humanitarian assistance and disaster relief mission in the Indo-Pacific - in May 2019.⁴ In spite of the US sanctions affecting some Burmese officials, the participation of a military vessel from Myanmar further stressed the AUMX inclusive dimension: the spokesperson of the

1 Dzirhan Mahadzir, *Inaugural AUMX Exercise Seeks to Deepen U.S.-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation*, US Naval Institute, September 3, 2019, <https://news.usni.org/2019/09/03/inaugural-aumx-exercise-seeks-to-deepen-u-s-asean-maritime-cooperation>; "Warships and aircraft ready for first US-ASEAN maritime drills", The Jakarta Post, September 2, 2019, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2019/09/02/warships-and-aircraft-ready-for-first-us-asean-maritime-drills.html>

2 Lilit Kapur, *The ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise and Maritime Security*, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative-CSIS, September 11, 2019, <https://amti.csis.org/the-asean-u-s-military-exercise-and-maritime-security/>

3 Singapore Government Press Center, *RSN's Information-Sharing System Main Platform Used At Inaugural ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise*, Press Release, September 2, 2019, https://www.gov.sg/resources/sgpc/media_releases/mindef/press_release/P-20190902-1

4 Lim Min Zhang, *How Does the Indo-Pacific Defense Chiefs Conference Fit into Asia's Security Landscape?*, The Straits Times, September 3, 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/inaugural-asean-us-maritime-exercise-a-positive-step-towards-a-more-networked-region-says>

Commander in Chief Zaw Min Tun declared that its country received invitation to join this drill focused on fighting against piracy and crime in order to enhance security.⁵

This naval exercise is linked to the Plan of action to implement the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership 2016-2020, which provides for the promotion of broad dialogue and the strengthening of cooperation to deal with the security threats and challenges, which affect the region. This Plan of action - which emphasises ASEAN's centrality in the regional security architecture - explicitly requires maritime cooperation between ASEAN countries and US aimed at promoting and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight as well as the resolution of disputes by peaceful means.⁶

After some delays, in October 2018 ASEAN Defence Ministers and the US former Defence Secretary Mattis took the decision to carry out this first joint naval exercise during an informal meeting held in Singapore, which was held in conjunction with the maritime joint drills between ASEAN and China, conducted in that month.⁷

This recent AUMX exercise was carried out in a period of renovated tensions among some ASEAN countries and China, concerning unsolved disputes and territorial claims on the South China Sea, because of the exploration activities undertaken by Chinese guard coast vessels along Vietnamese waters and the controversial event about the sinking of a fishing boat in the Philippines' waters:⁸ moreover, in August Chinese navy carried out military drills in the Gulf of Tonkin (Vietnam, even if these countries signed in 2000 a maritime delimitation's deal, which allows to define potential territorial disputes) and in the disputed waters of Paracelso Islands, testing new warships and weapons.⁹

Even if Thailand's Vice Admiral Charoenpol Kumrasee officially declared that this military drill was not related to the regional maritime disputes on the South China Sea, but aimed at training regional navies and to provide humanitarian assistance and to mitigate disasters, in the words of Admiral Joey Tynch - which oversees theatre security cooperation for the U.S. Navy in Southeast Asia - emerges that "AUMX builds greater maritime security on the strength of ASEAN, the strength of our navy-to-navy bonds, and the strength of our shared belief in a free and open Indo-Pacific".¹⁰

Even if US has not direct claims to made on the South China Sea, Washington considers the freedom of maritime navigation along this sea as a cornerstone of its Indo-Pacific Strategy, aimed to contain China's geopolitical influence and its military expansion. Consequently, the involvement of Southeast Asian countries in this maritime exercise is useful to legitimize the US key role to preserve peace, security and stability in the region. Furthermore, these naval drills backed by Washington can trigger a potential friction with the Chinese proposal - which was made during the negotiations with ASEAN countries in order to elaborate the draft Code of Conduct along the South

5 Joe Kumbun, *The US-ASEAN Maritime Exercise: Why Myanmar Matters*, The Irrawaddy, September 9, 2019, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/the-us-asean-maritime-exercise-why-myanmar-matters.html>

6 ASEAN Official Website, *Plan of action to implement the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership 2016-2020*, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/2015/November/27th-summit/statement/ASEAN-US%20POA%202016-2020_Adopted.pdf

7 Prashanth Parameswaran, *Why the First US-ASEAN Maritime Exercise Matters*, The Diplomat, August 26, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/why-the-first-us-asean-maritime-exercise-matters/>

8 Fabio Indeo, *Dispute marittime e rivendicazioni delle nazioni ASEAN nel Mar Cinese Meridionale*, Osservatorio Strategico 2019– Anno XXI n. II, pp. 62-67.

9 Minnie Chan, *China puts new weapons and warships through paces in live-fire drills near Vietnam*, South China Morning Post, August 16, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3023197/china-puts-new-weapons-and-warships-through-paces-live-fire>

10 Dzirhan Mahadzir, *Inaugural AUMX Exercise Seeks to Deepen U.S.-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation*, US Naval Institute, September 3, 2019, <https://news.usni.org/2019/09/03/inaugural-aumx-exercise-seeks-to-deepen-u-s-asean-maritime-cooperation>; Wassana Nanuam, *First US-Asean naval exercise begins*, The Bangkok Post, September 2, 2019, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1741184/first-us-asean-naval-exercise-begins>; ASEAN Information Center, *ASEAN-US naval exercise starts in Thailand*, September 3, 2019, http://www.asean thai.net/english/ewt_news.php?nid=2955&filename=index

China Sea - which states that “The Parties shall establish a notification mechanism on military activities, and to notify each other of major military activities if deemed necessary. The Parties shall not hold joint military exercises with countries from outside the region, unless the parties concerned are notified beforehand and express no objection”.¹¹

In addition, ASEAN countries do not agree with the “exclusivity dimension” which characterizes this proposal, because it impinges on their sovereignty and on their right to autonomously choose framework of cooperation and alliances in the security field. On the same time, ASEAN countries want to reassure Beijing authorities about their participation in the AUMX exercise, which do not imply their direct support and involvement in the Washington's strategy of containment towards China. Considering the huge relevance of Chinese investments and the strategic role of China in the region, this approach would be opposed to the foreign policy goals of ASEAN countries, which aim at achieving a multi-vector strategy based on balancing the interests of the external powers: in fact, ASEAN countries joined maritime drill with China in October 2018.¹²

Unlike other regional blocs (as the European Union with its Common and Security Defence Policy, or the Collective Security Treaty Organization - which includes Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - within the framework of the Commonwealth of the Independent States in the post soviet space) ASEAN countries have not elaborated a security mechanism to provide collective security, so each state has undertaken singular defence and security policies based on their own specific national interests, a condition which allows them the possibility to develop security cooperation also with “third countries” (in addition to China and US) such as Australia and Japan.¹³

ASEAN between China and United States: moving forward a multi-vector foreign and security policy?

ASEAN approach towards the most powerful external actors (China and United States), based on cooperation but at the same time maintaining equidistance, has been formalized following the adoption of the document “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” during the annual summit of the organization in June: this document stresses the engagement of ASEAN countries to develop a foreign policy's autonomous vision in the economic cooperation and in the security field, with respect to two geopolitical contenders.¹⁴

Among ASEAN countries, Singapore has been able to achieve cleverly an efficient multi-vector strategy in foreign policy, based on the balance of Sino-American interests and ambitions, also considering that Singapore has close economic and strategic relations with the US.

Three weeks after AUMX joint exercise, Singapore's leader Lee Hsien Long announced the renewal of the agreement with the US, which ensures the possibility for American military forces to access on the naval and air military bases located in the “Lion City”¹⁵ territory until 2035: this decision has strengthened the role of this city-state in the US strategy towards Asia. This agreement was originally signed in 1990 by the former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew - then renovated in 2005 - and allowed the access of the US military forces until 2020. Collin Koh (maritime security analyst at S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies) correctly points out that the first agreement signed by Singapore overlapped with the parallel closure of the US military

11 Carl Thayer, *A closer look at the ASEAN-China single draft South China Sea Code of Conduct*, The Diplomat, August 3, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/a-closer-look-at-the-asean-china-single-draft-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct/>

12 Collin Koh, *Should China be worried about the US-Asean sea drill?*, The South China Morning Post, September 2, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/3025156/should-china-be-worried-about-us-asean-sea-drill>

13 Ibidem

14 ASEAN, *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf

15 The name of the city-state derives from the Malese word Singapura, Singa=lion and Pura=city

bases located in the Philippines in the early 1990s (the Subic Bay naval base and Clark airbase), so promoting the role of Singapore as main logistical hub of support for the US operations in the Western Pacific.¹⁶ He also underlines that the US presence - which was perceived at the beginning as a factor of regional destabilisation - has proved to be positive in the climate of uncertainty following the end of the “cold war”, allowing ASEAN countries to draw their attention and efforts on the economic and social development of their nations in a scenario of peace and security ensured by the US military presence.¹⁷

While he was in New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly, Lee Hsien Long declared that this deal reflects the existent excellent cooperation between the countries in the security field. On the US perspective, this agreement shows the will of President Trump to follow the “Pivot to Asia” strategy launched by his predecessor Obama and focussed on the need to relocate naval military forces on the Indo-Pacific geopolitical area (moving them from the Atlantic Ocean), as an indispensable cornerstone of the regional security architecture.

However, at the same time, Singapore has upgraded a relevant strategic cooperation with China. In May 2019, following a bilateral meeting held in the city-state between the Singaporean Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen and the Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe, Singapore and China arranged a “substantial programme” in order to deepen military relations, to further bolster the existent defence cooperation agreement and to replicate in 2020 joint bilateral maritime exercise, similarly to the military drills held for the first time in 2015.¹⁸ Singapore's defence minister also drawn the attention on the high-level bilateral dialogue (involving national think tanks and universities) and to increase bilateral exercises.

From 27 July to 5 August 2019, Singaporean and Chinese armed forces carried out a bilateral military drill concluded with a joint antiterrorism exercise set in an urban context: this was the fourth joint exercise within the “Exercise Cooperation” format launched in 2009.¹⁹ Singapore's intention to develop bilateral military relations with China represents an unicum in the ASEAN region, because the ten ASEAN countries primarily carry out military drill with Beijing not bilaterally but as regional bloc, as in October 2018 (for the first time) and April 2019 (this drill was attended by six ASEAN countries).

In addition, Malaysia seems determined to adopt this equidistant strategy between China and US, developing an autonomous foreign policy and an independent approach on regional issues.

The Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir recently renovated the country's foreign policy vision, which remains based on a non-alignment strategy in relation with the global main players, emphasizing how the Sino-American competition weakens multilateralism in the international system. Coherently with its non-alignment policy, Malaysia refused to send vessels of its national Navy to join the multilateral naval drill within the ASEAN framework promoted by China (October 2018) and United States (September 2019).

In this strategic document - named “Change in Continuity” - the preservation of good relations with all countries and the engagement to settle peacefully potential disputes (in accordance with the international law) continue to represent the main key drivers of the new

16 Dewey Sim, *Singapore renews military bases pact with US amid deepening defence ties with China*, The South China Morning Post, September 24, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3030111/china-will-be-wary-us-singapore-deal-military-bases>

17 Ibidem

18 Lim Min Zhang, *Larger military exercises on the cards as Singapore and China revise defence pact*, Strait Times, May 29, 2019, <https://www.straittimes.com/singapore/singapore-and-china-defence-ministers-agree-to-upgraded-defence-pact>

19 Singapore MINDEF, *Singapore and China Strengthen Military Cooperation in Bilateral Army Exercise*, new release, August 5, 2019, https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/news-and-events/latest-releases/article-detail/2019/August/05aug19_nr

approach in foreign policy.²⁰ A specific section of the document is dedicated to the South China Sea, where Malaysia wants to avoid the militarization of the disputes, highlighting that “the South China Sea should be a sea of cooperation, connectivity and community-building and not confrontation or conflict. This is in line with the spirit of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). Malaysia will actively promote this vision in ASEAN”.²¹

Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Singapore signed ZOPFAN agreement in 1971, which provides that South East Asia will remain outside and free from interference of the external actors, fundamentally reaffirming the main orientation expressed in the ASEAN strategic document.

On a diplomatic perspective, following the meeting between Foreign Policy Ministers in Beijing, on 12 September Malaysia and China agreed to create a joint mechanism of dialogue on the South China Sea's unsolved issues - such as dispute resolution, discussion on the issues related to maritime and territorial sovereignty, enhancement of the cooperation about economically-relevant issues as fisheries or security - with the aim to reduce tensions which opposed these two nations.²² This bilateral agreement - which China also signed with Brunei and Philippines - should be included in a broader framework of regional cooperation aimed at reaching the necessary consensus among all involved actors to achieve a solution of the open disputes.

Analysis, assessments and forecasts

The involvement of the ASEAN countries in the naval drill with the US expresses the pragmatic approach adopted by these states to forge their foreign policies, with the clear goal to maintain a balanced multi-vector strategy between American and Chinese interests in order to maximize the economic gains, especially in the regional security field.

If AUMX exercise underlines Washington's intention to legitimize itself as the only regional security provider, containing Chinese ambitions, the ASEAN-China military drill is mostly aimed at obtaining confidence and support of the ASEAN countries, pushing them to put aside concerns related to the real aims of the China's growing influence in the region.

In fact, this Sino-American geopolitical competition appears neglect the ongoing evolution that characterizes ASEAN countries that, following the adoption of the document “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific”, agree on the common intention to define an autonomous geopolitical vision, to undertake a multi-vector foreign policy which primarily aims to realize economic and security goals expressed by the region.

On the other hand, some years ago Lee Kuan Yew - the founder of the city-state of Singapore and the father of the current Prime Minister - stated that he was not contrary to the contemporary presence of Chinese and American logistical bases in Singapore, further showing that national (and regional) security needs have to prevail on geopolitical and strategic considerations due to the strategies of external actors.

20 Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, *Speech at the Launch of The Foreign Policy Framework of The New Malaysia*, September 18, 2019, <https://www.pmo.gov.my/2019/09/the-launch-of-the-foreign-policy-framework-of-the-new-malaysia/>

21 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Official website, *Foreign Policy Framework of the New Malaysia. Change in Continuity*, June 2019, p.19, <https://www.kln.gov.my/foreign-policy-framework/>

22 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Official website, *China, Malaysia to set up South China Sea dialogue mechanism*, September 12, 2019, https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/mfa-news/-/asset_publisher/C8q577qP89S1/content/china-malaysia-to-set-up-south-china-sea-dialogue-mechanism

Thematic Area

**“The situation of the
International Defense
Industry: autarchy towards
internationalization”**

Integration is, currently, a solid trend in defense industry; among the reasons: the rising costs, an increasing complexity and the cuts that – during the past – affected the defense budgets in several countries. At international level, a complex string of mergers and takeovers has led – during the years – to the emergence of a small number of global players (like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, BAE Systems, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, Airbus, Thales e Leonardo), whose main points of strength are scale and innovation. On the background, the European Union has moved actively to promote a continentally integrated defense industry, on the forefront of technology, and capable to withstand US competition and to support the European ambitions of strategic autonomy, which have gained strength in the most recent times. The Juncker commission (2014-19) has been especially active in this sense. For example, it started the Permanent Structured Cooperation – PESCO (envisaged in the Lisbon treaty of 2009 but effective since 2017), promoting the creation of a European Defence Fund (EDF) and providing – before its start, scheduled in 2021 – temporary funds to both support joint industrial programs and promote joint research activities in the defense field.

However, several doubts remain regarding the actual degree of integration of the European defense industry in both cooperative procurement and R&D. According to the 2018 European Defence Agency (EDA) report, the last available figures (2016, with projections to 2017) show only limited developments in the field of cooperative procurement (from 18.7 to 20.3% of the total expenditure) compared to the term of reference (2006) while in the field of the R&D situation is more or less stable at 9.0%. The same source remarks that, in 2016, cooperative procurement accounted for 6.3 billion euros, but if the 27 EDA countries would have really met the benchmark fixed in 2007 spending 35.0% of their total Defense budget in cooperative procurement, the figure would have approached 11.0 billion. In the same way, if the twenty-seven EDA member states would have spent the 20% of their defense R&D budget in collaborative projects (as the 2007 benchmark envisaged), the sum would have been (in 2016) some 316 million euros, more than the double of the effective figure (143 million)¹.

Fill the gap between targets and results is one of the aims of the new European Commission (EC). Few weeks ago, its President, the former German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, remarked how, in the future, «[t]he European Union needs to be more strategic, more assertive, and more united in its approach to external relations»², also in the security and defense sector, and put forth the possibility to overcome the current unanimity principle, replacing it with that of qualified majority. However, the most part of the analysts is cautious. The path toward the oft quoted “defense industry common market” is full of obstacles related to the presence, among the others, of national monopolies, “military secrets”, and sovereignty issues. In the past months, the German moratorium on military supplies to Saudi Arabia, including goods that have been developed abroad but in collaboration with German partners and/or containing parts or components produced or developed by or in collaboration with German firms, shed light on the vulnerability of a sector whose integration – lacking a proper legal framework – can be more a

1 *Defence Data 2016-2017, Key Findings and Analysis*, EDA, Brussels, 2018, p. 11. On the 2007 benchmark and their meaning see <https://www.eda.europa.eu/info-hub/defence-data-portal/Benchmarks>. As the same survey remarks, the figures on cooperative procurement and R&D are the most affected by the problems that – since 2012 – some countries are facing in providing the required data.

2 A Rettman, *DG defence: Is EU getting serious on joint procurement?*, “EU Observer”, 11 Sept. 2019, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/145905>. For a general evaluation of the von der Leyen commission and its priorities see *The von der Leyen commission: key appointments for a more assertive EU*, “Financial Times”, 10 Sept. 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/279cce30-d3b5-11e9-8367-807ebd53ab77>.

source a weakness than of strength³. In this perspective, defending the “old” “national champions” and/or resorting to the traditional global suppliers (first of all the US defense industry) can be seen by several countries as a tool to better protect their interests and autonomy than the quest for an integration often perceived as dangerous and not really useful.

“Brexit” impact on the one hand, US competition on the other make this state of things even more complex. British defense industry provides an important support to the common effort and the end of the collaboration could negatively impact on both sides. Not by chance, some observers have pointed out that the tentative to elaborate forms of military cooperation outside the CSDP framework could be partially linked to the will of keeping a possible “post Brexit” Britain somehow integrated into a multilateral defense structure⁴. US competition too is an important challenge for the Union, especially on Central European markets, where the possibility to buy “off the shelf” still maintains a strong technical, political and economic attractiveness. Within the framework of its security strategy (but also of its strategy to protect and promote national industry -- defense industry included), the Trump administration started, in the last months, an ad hoc program (European Recapitalization Incentive Program - ERIP) to favor the decommissioning of the old former Soviet assets and their replacement with new US materiel in countries like Albania, Bosnia, North Macedonia and Slovakia, as well as in Greece⁵. Accounting for 190 million dollars, ERIP is, currently, only a token fund. However, beyond its actual impact, it risks opening a new conflict front with Europe after the one opened few months ago by the US request to allow national companies to compete in the future bids funded by the EDF⁶.

3 See G. Pastori, *Le nuove tensioni del Golfo: un banco di prova dei rapporti Europa-Stati Uniti*, “Osservatorio Strategico [CeMiSS]”, vol. 21 (2019), no. 2, pp. 8-13. On the issue of the common legal framework see also S. Besch - B. Oppenheim, *Up in arms. Warring over Europe’s arms export regime*, Centre for European Reform, [London *et al.*], 2019. Recently, the German moratorium has been extended for other six months, until 31 March 2020.

4 See G. Pastori, *La NATO e la sfida di un’identità militare europea: la European Intervention Initiative (EI2)*, “Osservatorio Strategico [CeMiSS]”, vol. 20 (2018), no. 1, pp. 8-12. On the possible impact of “Brexit” on European defence industry see, e.g., D.B. Larter, *As Britain lurches toward Brexit, how will European security fare?*, “Defense News”, 8 Sept. 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2019/09/08/as-britain-lurches-toward-brexit-how-will-european-security-fare>; on its impact on British defence industry see N. Witheny, *The Brexit threat to Britain’s defence industry*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 1 Feb. 2019, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_brexit_threat_to_britains_defence_industry.

5 A Metha - S. Sprenger, *European defense industry could come to regret new US weapons fund*, “Defense News”, 30 May 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2019/05/30/european-defense-industry-could-come-to-regret-new-us-weapons-fund>.

6 On this issue and its possible implications see D. Fiott, *The poison pill: EU defence on US terms?*, EUISS Brief no. 7, European Union Institute for Strategic Studies Luxembourg, June 2019, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/poison-pill-eu-defence-us-terms>.

International cooperation in weapons programmes in Europe has fairly limited numbers. A reference study by the European Commission and the European Defence Agency (EDA) on the development of the European defense market, quantifies the collaborative programs at 20% of the total. The allocation of European funds for the Preparatory Action on Defence Research has not challenged it, but the European Commission hopes that, starting from 2021, by means of the "capability window" of the European Defence Fund (EDF) the quotas shall be reversed: with 20% of the funds financed by the Union, stimulating an 80% financed by the Member States.

Aerospace is the most collaborative defence sector, as it implies investment risks in research and development that are difficult to sustain by individual states; most of the multi-role fighters in Europe are the result of multilateral cooperation, just to mention the Tornado MRCA and Eurofighter Typhoon resulting from the collaboration between Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom (and Spain for Eurofighter). The exception to the rule is represented by France, with the Dassault Mirage series and currently the Rafale, and by Sweden with the Saab Viggen and now the Gripen. Italy and the United Kingdom have their own tradition of trainer/light fighter aircraft for Italy with the MB-326, MB-339, M-346 and M-345 formerly Aermacchi and now Leonardo Aircraft and for the UK with the BAE Hawk. In transport aircraft and in the rotary wing, there are collaborative solutions by default, as these segments are entrusted to large multinational companies such as Airbus for France, Germany and Spain or the former Augusta Westland now Leonardo Helicopters for Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom.

Shipbuilding often enjoys bilateral collaboration in the frigate-class, such as the Franco-Italian collaboration in Horizon-class and FREMM, while larger units such as the carriers and nuclear submarines, or smaller units such as corvettes and logistic units the national solution is preferred by referring to national shipyard, such as BAE of the UK, Fincantieri of Italy, Naval Group of France, Saab's Kockums of Sweden and ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) of Germany.

The land sector is national by vocation, also because land systems enjoy more sustainable costs in research and development and production. These are sustainable even by small-medium States with a defence industrial base having mature technologies.

For defence electronics, including avionics, land-based or naval applications, there are both national solutions represented by small and medium-sized enterprises, and transnational solutions, represented by large companies of the European defence industry.

The missile sector is the most interesting because, at the beginning of the XXIst century, it was consolidated at European level in the transnational company MBDA of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom

We already referred to the types of collaboration that may concern the programmes or the industrial entities involved. The most flexible type of collaboration is the partnership agreement: when two or more companies collaborate only for a specific programme according to the conditions determined by the agreement, thus being distinct and independent from each other. Then comes the consortium: when companies are distinct and independent from each other but create a specific entity (eg Panavia for Tornado or Eurofighter GmbH) for long-term collaboration in a given project. In the Joint Venture, two or more companies create an institution in which they participate through stock shares - if at 50% it is an equal JV - to which they entrust a specific segment of activity (eg: Alenia Marconi Systems of Italy and the United Kingdom in the 90s and the JV Fincantieri Naval Group for military ships nowadays). Eventually, it comes the transnational company in which two or more companies from different States create an entity with its own legal personality and headquarters in one or more States (eg: MBDA), but the original companies continue to remain distinct from the new entity of which they own shares.

The next level are represented by international acquisition or merger of companies. In the acquisition of shares, or full acquisition of all of the capital, the acquiring company retains its legal personality, while the target company becomes a subsidiary, according to the shares purchased, or loses his own legal personality by becoming a division or a branch of the acquiring company. In the merger of companies, two or more companies even of different nationalities merge by losing their own legal personality, which is transmitted to the new entity that has a single legal personality. It is also possible that the parent companies may constitute the branches, the divisions or the sectors of the new company (eg; EADS now Airbus).

It is clear that industrial agreements shall be supported, if not promoted by the respective national governments, since they are sectors in which national security is an essential principle.

The industrial consolidation waves have been promoted by the States - and paradoxically by the European Union, despite the principle of competition -. The industrial consolidation wave started at the end of the 20th century, which reached its climax in the establishment of EADS (now Airbus) it is said to have been promoted by Prime Minister Tony Blair and the late French President Jacques Chirac at the St. Malo summit in 1998, which is traditionally indicated as the first impulse given to the development of today's European defence cooperation.

The original idea was to merge British Aerospace of the UK with Aérospatiale-Matra of France, and DASA of Germany (who had just acquired CASA of Spain) to be followed by Finmeccanica of Italy (which regrouped IRI manufacturing companies, and was then going to acquire Agusta and Aermacchi) and Saab of Sweden. This plan failed because British Aerospace preferred to purchase its electronic systems supplier, GEC Marconi, becoming BAE systems. Therefore, France and Germany decided to proceed on their own by establishing the multinational company EADS, recently renamed Airbus after the commercial aircraft branch. Prime Minister Blair agreed Finmeccanica (now Leonardo) to acquire the avionics division of BAE systems, which was establishing an important footprint in the United States, and Agusta to acquire Westland, thus becoming AgustaWestland (100% controlled by Finmeccanica since 2005). He also agreed Thomson of France to acquire the British company Racal, thus becoming Thales.

More recently in Italy, the former prime minister, Matteo Renzi, in an interview with "*La Repubblica*" suggested Leonardo to merge with Fincantieri at national level to avoid foreign bids, since there already exists JV Fincantieri with Naval Group . The "Capricorn" plan should see the two companies merge into the new "CDP Industria" portfolio controlled by Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP). Some analysts, including prof. Michele Nones of the International Affairs Institute of Rome, consider the core sectors of the two companies – respectively cruise ships, and aerospace and defence – to be too different from each other to be consistent. On the possible leadership of the merged company, it is to be considered that Leonardo has a larger size of staff and turnover, as well as an international multi-domestic projection that Fincantieri has only recently undertaken.

In Europe, the major transnational collaborative programmes focus on the 6th generation fighters, such as the Franco-German-Spanish programme SCAF, which is opposed to the Tempest of the UK programme, which opened this summer to international collaboration, thus becoming a British-Italian-Swedish collaboration. There is also the expectation that probably in the short term the two programs will merge into one, which according to this author, it will take place with the accession of France to Tempest, who will bring with it technologies developed of its own.

Production and the international arms market have undergone significant changes since the end of the Cold War, as demonstrated by the decrease in defence globally spending since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Between 1989 and 1996, the allocations for the strategic sector have decreased by about one third in real terms, while the new nature of the conflicts has pushed the States to move away from the great traditional arsenals to privilege more innovative systems of armaments¹. For this reason, as many as twenty-four of the 100 largest companies in the world that were involved in the defence sector in 1990, eight years later had abandoned the production of arms².

According to a recent study, published by two researchers from the Bilkent University of Ankara and the Nanyang Technology University of Singapore, this transformation has produced an increasing level of cooperation between defence industries that have adopted co-production agreements, partnerships, mergers, acquisitions and joint venture. In order to respond to the increase in production costs and to the search for increasingly sophisticated weapons³.

The painstaking research carried out by the two scholars to investigate the effects of the post-Cold War transformation on international politics and the realities that dominate the defence industry point two conclusions. The level of integration has not reached the standards expected in Europe, and other countries continue to focus on autarchy in arms production despite financial sanctions⁴.

This change has created a debate among experts in the field, some of whom believe that it would have been favoured by the impact of globalization on defence production. An impact that would have led to the adoption of a defence industry policy oriented towards privatization, export and market liberalization. Those who instead refute the effects of globalization argue rightly that the level of integration and cooperation is different in all regions.

What emerges with certainty in recent years is that we are witnessing a growth trend in military spending in the world, as has not happened since the Cold War. The authoritative Stockholm International Institute for Peace Research (SIPRI) confirmed this, when in its annual report calculated that in 2018 were spent 1.822 billion dollars on defence⁵. A figure that certifies an increase of 2.6 per cent compared to the previous year⁶.

While the new Deloitte report on the performance of the Aerospace and Defence industry in 2019 motivates the significant increase in military spending relative to the intensification of geopolitical tensions, which induced most of the countries concerned to strengthen their military sector⁷.

A tangible growth, that according to the analysts of the preeminent world provider of Risk Advisory services, is largely justified by the evolution of global threats that have spread from the traditional terrestrial theatre and the maritime disputes to the hybrid war, piracy, outpost-building, urban uprising, lone wolf attacks against civilian targets, and cyber-attacks⁸. A scenario that according to Deloitte will lead to an increase in security threats around the world and consequently, over the next few years, defence spending will also continue to rise⁹.

1 www.pwc.pl/en/publikacje/defence_industry_ads.pdf

2 Ibidem

3 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2018.1497318>

4 Ibidem

5 www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/fs_1904_milex_2018_0.pdf

6 Ibidem

7 www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/manufacturing/us-mfg-2019-global-a-and-d-sector-outlook.pdf

8 www2.deloitte.com/tr/en/pages/manufacturing/articles/2018-global-a-and-d-outlook.html

9 Ibidem

Meanwhile, companies in the sector continue to increase their market share, as confirmed by 2018 SIPRI ranking, which examines the sales recorded in the defence sector by the top one hundred producers in the world¹⁰. Sales in 2017 reached 398.2 billion dollars, up 2.5 per cent on 2016, registering the plus sign for the third consecutive year, which is in contrast to the declining trend started after 2010¹¹.

Among the top one hundred suppliers of armaments, 66 are American or Western Europe, and occupy a market share of 81 per cent. Among the top ten classified, which alone have recorded 198.2 billion dollars in sales in 2017, four US and five Europeans corporations take up the first nine places, and for the first time a Russian company – Almaz-Antey – occupies the tenth position¹².

To find in the SIPRI ranking the first company not based in the United States, Russia or Western Europe, it is necessary to go down to the 24th position occupied from Mitsubishi, with 3.6 billion dollars of weapons sales. Behind the Japanese company, in 28th place there is the Israeli Elbit Systems, which registered a 2.8 per cent drop; followed by the Swedish Saab, which fell from 30th to 36th, with a 5.3 per cent drop in sales.

In the SIPRI chart, there is also the growth of the so-called "emerging producers" like Brazil, India and Turkey, which grouped 11.1 billion dollars in arms sales, 8.1 per cent more than in 2016.

Of course, no African company appears in the Top 100, confirming that the continent, with the exception of South Africa, remains a net importer in the global arms market. According to the most recent data provided by SIPRI, between 2009 and 2018, there was a 6.5 per cent drop in arms sales in Africa¹³. In the same decade, Sub-Saharan states received 25 per cent of total shipments of arms destined for the continent. While the top five importing countries of the area were: Nigeria, Angola, Sudan, Cameroon and Senegal, which together accounted for 56 per cent of the weapons arriving in the macro-region¹⁴.

At the same time, the data collected in a report on the trade in small arms in sub-Saharan Africa, published by the Small Arms Survey last December, indicate that between 2013 and 2015: Ivory Coast, Malawi, Niger, and Namibia received important shipments of small arms¹⁵.

In the same way, it is also interesting to remember the origin of this military equipment. The data show that the sub-Saharan countries that are facing jihadist attacks are buying large quantities of weapons from their usual suppliers China, France, Israel, Russia, and the United States. In this regard, SIPRI specifies that Russia represent 28 per cent of arms exports to sub-Saharan Africa in 2014-2018, China 24 per cent, Ukraine 8.3 per cent, the United States 7.1 per cent and France 6.1 per cent¹⁶.

These data become even more relevant if we take into consideration the growing role of Russia in Africa, which hosted an important economic summit in Moscow at the end of June, attended by over a thousand delegates from Africa¹⁷. In fact, Russia, in the same way as China and the United States, is developing a strategy towards Africa in an attempt to expand its influence through diplomatic initiatives and trade, which include bilateral arms sales agreements with numerous African states¹⁸.

10 www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/fs_arms_industry_2017_0.pdf

11 *Ibidem*

12 www.cnbc.com/2019/01/10/top-10-defense-contractors-in-the-world.html

13 www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/fs_1903_at_2018.pdf

14 *Ibidem*

15 www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/S-Trade-Update/SAS-Trade-Update-2018.pdf

16 *Cit.*, www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/fs_1903_at_2018.pdf

17 <https://tass.com/economy/1064450>

18 www.ozy.com/fast-forward/russ

There are other important countries to consider, such as Belarus, which until 2017 was Sudan's main arms supplier¹⁹. Without neglecting Brazil, which in sub-Saharan Africa has secured numerous buyers for the EMB 314 Super Tucano, an ultra-light attack aircraft manufactured by Embraer. The Brazilian company, since March 2012, has concluded numerous agreements to sell the turboprop to the military aviation of Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Angola and Mauritania²⁰.

All this shows that there are more and more countries interested in selling arms to the African states, which are trying to expand their influence in the region and make the most profit of the arms trade.

19 <https://belarusdigest.com/story/can-belarus-keep-a-strong-position-on-the-global-arms-markets/>

20 www.defenseindustrydaily.com/super-tucano-counter-insurgency-plane-makes-inroads-into-africa-07348/

Introduction

The structure of the defence industry in eastern and southern Africa is largely underdeveloped and dependent from international markets for access to military hardware. An important exception is represented by South Africa, which was able to develop a quasi-autarchy regime during the Apartheid years. With the end of the Cold War and the opening of the African continent to multipolar competition, new military cooperation programmes along a South-South axis have begun to undermine Western hegemony in the African arms market. Over the past decade, countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Angola have taken significant steps to attract foreign investment in the military sector in joint ventures with the state, so as to create the foundations of a national military-industrial system. The South African industry, at the same time, has taken advantage of this trend to establish itself as a privileged partner in the process of Africanization of military industrial systems.

The trajectory of the arms industry in South Africa

The defence industry in South Africa played a central role in the national economy during the Apartheid years. The need to develop an industrial pole that would protect Pretoria from the risks of an international embargo, as well as the aggressive foreign policy towards its neighbours, have for a long time guaranteed large public support to the sector, to the extent that in 1989 the country had reached a high degree of autarchy for its military needs. The end of the Cold War and the reduction of internal orders forced a restructuring of business strategies. Since the 2000s, a growing number of companies have gradually expanded their business horizons to the civil sector - especially mining - and broadened their range of activities beyond national borders, with the aim of gaining access to new markets¹.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the privileged theatre of this process of internationalisation, as can be seen from the 2017 document of the South Africa National Defense Industry Council². Pretoria justifies its ambitions in the sector by virtue of its experience in the production of equipment that has been specifically designed to operate in an African context. Moreover, it can exploit the principle of "African solutions for African problems" to legitimize its own commercial strategy from a diplomatic point of view, placing itself as a champion of South-South cooperation. The tendency of South African multinationals to establish joint ventures in the destination countries is high, and is brought as a proof of the mutually beneficial nature of these investments.

A paradigmatic example of this trend is African Explosives Limited-South Africa, which since 2003 has undertaken a strategy of expansion in southern and eastern Africa³. The company began through the subsidiary African Explosives Zambia, before developing a series of joint ventures in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mali, Zimbabwe and Botswana⁴. The relocation of the production process has accelerated since 2013, when the collapse of the price of raw materials and its impact on the South African mining sector have prompted shareholders to seek new business niches outside the country⁵. Another example is the Osprea Logistics company, operating in Mombasa since 2012 with an investment of 41 million dollars for the production of armoured vehicles.

1 David Botha, South Africa's Defence Industry: charting a new course?, 78, 2003.

2 National Industry Defence Council, Defence Industry Strategy, May 2017, www.armscor.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Defence-Industry-Strategy-Draft_v5.8_Internet.pdf

3 Mining Weekly, 24 January 2003. <https://www.miningweekly.com/article/explosives-producer-to-expand-its-african-focus-in-2003-2003-01-24-1>

4 <https://www.reuters.com/companies/AELZ.LZ>

5 Bernard KAninda, The development of a strategic framework for South African explosives companies expanding business activities into Sub-Saharan Countries, Master Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand,

The success of South African companies is partly linked to their ability in intercepting partner countries' technical assistance requests in the development of a low-tech military industrial system, able to meet the primary needs of the armed forces. For example, Kenya established an ammunition factory in Eldoret in 1997, placing the company under the ownership of the Ministry of Defence. A similar path has been followed by Tanzania - whose Ministry of Defence owns an ammunition factory in Morogoro - and Ethiopia, where the parastatal company METEC produces ammunition for machine guns and mortars. Another success factor is the supply of equipment particularly suited to the operational theatres of the African armed forces, as well as the readiness of South African firms to accept delocalization. The Osprea plant in Mombasa was designed to cut the cost of supplying and providing technical assistance for the Mamba MK5, the armoured vehicle used by the Kenyan army in the AMISOM mission in Somalia⁶.

The defence industry of Pretoria has been pushing for expansion well beyond the boundaries of the African continent. Examples of joint ventures in the civil sector stem from Chile, where the explosives manufacturer Sasol South Africa signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Chilean mining company ENAEX SA⁷. Another growing market is the Saudi one. In 2019, Paramount Group signed a collaboration agreement with Saudi Arabian Military Industries for the development of joint industrial systems in Saudi Arabia, as part of the programme to strengthen the Arab monarchy's military industry⁸. Relations with Saudi Arabia are not limited to the case of Paramount Group. The state company Denel has for long looked at Riyadh as a potential partner in the event of privatization. Rumours of a Saudi takeover bid have been circulating since 2018, due to the company's extreme financial situation and difficulties in ensuring the regular payment of wages. Nevertheless, the success of the acquisition process is hampered by internal political factors. The importance of the arms industry to employment levels in South Africa and the close relations between the ANC and trade unions have so far led authorities to accept the grievances of the trade union organisations, which fear the negative effects of privatisation on workers' employment conditions⁹.

Other types of partnerships

While the countries of Eastern and Southern Africa - with the aforementioned exception of South Africa - remain dependent on foreign countries for the equipment of their armed forces, this dependence has been nonetheless calmed down by the trend towards diversification of military partners. This is certainly not new for Ethiopia, which has always resorted to a wide range of international donors to avoid excessive reliance on a single supplier. Addis Ababa has taken full advantage of its freedom of action on the international scene, forging links with "rogue" countries such as North Korea to obtain access to low-cost technologies that were critical for the foundations of a national military industry. Pyongyang's assistance has been instrumental in the establishment and management of the Homicho Ammunition Industry explosives and ammunition factory, located in the Oromia region. In 2014, a UN report suggested that Homicho was still working with North Korean partners through the Korea Mineral Trading Corporation, in violation of international

[http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/jspui/bitstream/10539/20930/1/Final%20dissertation%20MMR%20Bernard%20Kaninda%202nd%20submission%20\(Final\).pdf](http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/jspui/bitstream/10539/20930/1/Final%20dissertation%20MMR%20Bernard%20Kaninda%202nd%20submission%20(Final).pdf)

6 Defence Web, 22 novembre 2012. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/osprea-logistics-sets-up-mamba-mk5-factory-in-kenya/>

7 International Mining, 24 July 2019. <https://im-mining.com/2019/07/24/enaex-may-enter-african-mining-explosives-market-proposed-jv-sasol/>

8 African Aerospace, 5 July 2019. <https://www.africanaerospace.aero/paramount-forges-top-level-ties-with-saudi.html>

9 Reuters, 7 November 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-safrica-denel/major-south-african-union-opposes-state-arms-firm-stake-sale-idUSKCN1NC23M>

sanctions against Pyongyang¹⁰. Another company set up thanks to North Korean support is Gafat Armament Engineering, near Debre Zeit, where AK 47 are produced¹¹. Relations with North Korea have not prevented Addis Ababa from receiving US military assistance in the name of the fight against terrorism in Somalia. Over the past year, the government of Abiy Ahmed laid the foundations for the further diversification of its military partners by entering into new agreements with France and Italy.

Angola has also maintained a privileged military partnership with former Cold War partners such as China and Russia. At the beginning of 2019, the Angolan Minister of Defence confirmed the intention to deepen cooperation with Beijing within the framework of the Joint Cooperation Committee on Science, Technology and Defence¹². Russia, on the other hand, is a point of reference in the process of military industrialization: in April, the Angolan President, Joao Lourenço, announced the intention to open a factory for the production of Russian arms in Angolan territory, in light of the large quantity of military equipment imported from Moscow¹³.

10 "Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Resolution 1874 (2009)," United Nations Security Council, S/2014/147, p. 35.

11 38 North, 23 December 2014. https://www.38north.org/2014/12/aberger122314/#_ftn8

12 http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-06/25/content_9538110.htm

13 IDN, 7 April 2019. <https://www.indepthnews.net/index.php/the-world/africa/2598-russia-and-angola-stuck-between-diplomatic-rhetoric-and-business-reality>

Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus

Alessio Stilo

According to the latest SIPRI report (2018), in 2017 the first 100 global companies producing weapon systems totalled \$ 398.2 billion in sales, recording an increase of 2.5% over the previous year and 44% compared to 2002. This overall trend in the sale of arms in 2017 was driven by the increase in spending for the supply of new weapons systems by various actors, especially the United States and Russia¹, and by the general increase in global spending for the Defense sector².

Since 2010, Russian military exports have been stable above \$ 10 billion annually³. In 2017, it recorded an increase for the third consecutive year, reaching almost \$ 16 billion⁴. This trend was maintained also in 2018, with \$ 19 billion in exports, as confirmed by Rostec, the only state-owned holding company (which includes the monopolist military export companies) responsible for supplying and exporting Russian weapons and military equipment abroad⁵. Even in 2019 Moscow should maintain an export level of over \$ 10 billion: Rosoboronexport's CEO, Alexander Mikheyev, claims that since the beginning of the year (2019) the Russian Federation has already exported arms for an amount of \$ 8.5 billion, half of which represent aviation and air defence systems, sectors that have always been driving Russian military exports⁶. Mikheyev himself predicts that, thanks to the aerospace exhibition MAKS 2019 – traditional showcase for the new Russian military and civilian aircraft⁷, held between August 27th and September 1st – by the end of the year further contracts will be signed for the export of other airplanes, helicopters and air defence systems. Dmitry Shugayev, Head of the Federal Service for Military and Technical Cooperation, argues that Russia will permanently maintain the position of second global exporter in the sector (after the USA) and will increase the annual \$ 15 billion in exports, thanks to the expansion of the geography of deliveries, as well as the range of products supplied⁸. The intervention in Syria in support of Bashar al-Assad allowed Moscow to test and show off part of the new equipment and technologies in the military field, persuading several Middle Eastern and other actors to look at the Russian weapon systems to modernize their Armed Forces. In addition, Moscow can also count on a surplus of hardware inherited from the Soviet Union, largely obsolete for a modern armed force but still functional for medium-level performance in low and medium intensity conflicts, so that it can be sold cheaply to those countries with a limited Defence budget⁹.

Since 2007, Russia has worked to consolidate its military industry, creating larger companies which operate in specific defence-related sectors (for example, United Aircraft Corporation and

1 Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Nan Tian, Pieter D. Wezeman, Siemon T. Wezeman, *The SIPRI Top 100 arms-producing and military services companies, 2017*, SIPRI Fact Sheet, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, December 2018, p. 1.

2 Alessio Stilo, «Il rafforzamento dello strumento militare di molte nazioni in termini qualitativi e quantitativi. Un punto di situazione», Area Russia, Asia centrale e Caucaso, in Centro Militare di Studi Strategici (a cura di), *Osservatorio Strategico*, Anno XXI, Numero 3/2019, p. 76.

3 \$ 10.0 billion in 2010; \$ 13.2 billion in 2011; \$ 15.2 billion in 2012; \$ 13.2 billion in 2013; \$ 10 billion in 2014; \$ 14.5 billion in 2015; \$ 15 billion in 20.

4 "Putin: Russia's weapons export in 2017 exceeded \$15 billion", TASS, 05/03/2018 (<https://tass.com/defense/992835>).

5 "Russia's Arms Exporter Sold \$19Bn Worth of Weapons in 2018, Official Says", *The Moscow Times*, 01/11/2018 (<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/11/01/russias-arms-exporter-sold-19-billion-worth-weapons-2018-ceo-says-a63380>).

6 "Russia plans to sign contracts worth billions of dollars after MAKS-2019 – Rosoboronexport", TASS, 01/09/2019 (<https://tass.com/defense/1075924>).

7 Maurizio Sparacino, "Il salone aerospaziale russo MAKS 2019", *Analisi Difesa*, 10/09/2019 (<https://www.analisedifesa.it/2019/09/il-salone-aerospaziale-russo-maks-2019/>).

8 "Russia's arms exports to exceed current \$15 bln level in future", TASS, 25/06/2019 (<https://tass.com/defense/1065472>).

9 Mark Episkopos, "See How Russia Is Selling Lots of Military Hardware Around the Globe", *The National Interest*, 11/06/2019 (<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/see-how-russia-selling-lots-military-hardware-around-globe-62097>).

United Shipbuilding Corporation, which were the second and third largest producer of Russian weapons in 2017). In 2017, the United Instrument Manufacturing Corporation underwent a merger process with the state-owned Russian Electronics, leading to the establishment of a new company that continues to operate under the name Russian Electronics and entered the top 100 (47th) international companies of the sector. Overall, the first Russian company in terms of revenues from the sector continues to be the state-owned Almaz-Antey, ranked 10th in 2017 (\$ 8.57 billion). To follow, in order of greater sale of arms, among the top 50 Russian global companies there are the United Aircraft Corporation (almost entirely state-owned, with revenues of \$ 6.44 billion), the United Shipbuilding Corporation (public company, with revenues of \$ 4.98 billion), Tactical Missiles Corporation (100% state-owned, revenues of \$ 3.60 billion), Russian Helicopters (owned by the state-owned holding company Rostec, with revenues of \$ 3.17 billion), High Precision Systems (a subsidiary of Rostec, with revenues of \$ 2.83 billion), the United Engine Corporation (a subsidiary of Rostec, with revenues of \$ 2.57 billion)¹⁰.

Therefore, in the Russian case, state or para-state companies play a prominent role in the global arms sales market. As a matter of fact, similarly to most of the major military powers, the industrial-defensive complex of Russia – having decades of know-how inherited from the Soviet experience in the sector – retains a significant capacity to independently produce the equipment its Armed Forces needs, but in the recent past it has also had a certain degree of exposure to cooperation and (inter)dependence with foreign suppliers of specific niche technologies, such as Ukraine, Belarus and some Western European countries¹¹. Despite Moscow is still partially dependent on imports for some niche sectors connected to Defence (some machinery and industrial robots, together with some type of chemical, textile and printing equipment)¹², the Russian Defence Industry is essentially enrollable to a paradigm of a self-sufficient kind and the Western sanctions of recent years have reinforced this propensity¹³.

As mentioned before, Russia has transformed its Defence Industry into an important tool, which allows Moscow to generate revenues for the state coffers and to strengthen bilateral cooperation with countries, which sign such agreements. In fact, the bilateral agreement for the purchase of arms represents a peculiar way of guaranteeing the maintenance – or even the strengthening – of friendly relations, not to mention a certain level of influence by the exporting country on the importer. This is one of the main reasons for which States with an advanced Defence Industry try to be self-sufficient producing what they need¹⁴. In the light of this strategic assumption (also reported in the Russian Strategy for National Security of December 2015¹⁵) Russia, as well as the United States (and also China, in recent years¹⁶), is investing many resources in the competition for export markets, especially those connected in some way to Moscow's political and strategic interests. Among the most significant agreements, both at the

10 Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Nan Tian, Pieter D. Wezeman, Siemon T. Wezeman, *The SIPRI Top 100 arms-producing and military services companies, 2017*, op. cit., p. 5.

11 Andrey Frolov, "Russia: Defence technologies and industrial base", in Richard A. Bitzinger, Nicu Popescu (eds.), *Defence industries in Russia and China: Players and Strategies*, EU Institute for Security Studies, Report No. 38, December 2017, p. 10.

12 "Import substitution in Russia's defense industry remains a problem, says top prosecutor", *TASS*, 30/07/2019 (<https://tass.com/defense/1070976>); Michael Peck, "Russia's Military Admits It Needs Western Technology", *The National Interest*, 03/08/2019 (<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/russia%E2%80%99s-military-admits-it-needs-western-technology-70916>).

13 Maxim Trudolyubov, "Guns, Butter, and Russia's Enduring Military Power", *The Moscow Times*, 26/09/2019 (<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/09/26/guns-butter-and-russias-enduring-power-a67461>).

14 Dmitriy Bokarev, "A Prosperous Time for the Russian Defense Industry", *New Eastern Outlook*, 26/03/2019 (<https://journal-neo.org/2019/03/26/a-prosperous-time-for-the-russian-defense-industry/>).

15 *Russian National Security Strategy*, December 2015 – Full-text Translation, punto 37 (<https://www.urly.it/32wm6>).

16 Grace Shao, "China, the world's second largest defense spender, becomes a major arms exporter", *CNBC*, 26/09/2019 (<https://www.cNBC.com/2019/09/27/china-a-top-defense-spender-becomes-major-arms-exporter.html>).

economic level and in terms of potential strategic impact, we must especially mention the acquisition of the Russian anti-aircraft system S-400 by China, India and Turkey.

With India, in particular, in 2019 Russia has significantly strengthened cooperation in the sector: since last year, also due to renewed tensions with Pakistan, New Delhi has become the largest buyer of Russian military hardware, reaching the record figure of \$ 14.5 billion in purchases¹⁷. In addition to the contract concerning the S-400 (about \$ 5 billion), Moscow and New Delhi are negotiating the granting of a local production license (in India) of the same S-400, as well as the Su-30 fighter jets and T-90 tanks. The Indian Ministry of Defence has also signed an agreement with Rosoboronexport to modernize the radar and missile systems of the Indian navy ships of the Delhi class¹⁸, and has formalized an agreement for the delivery of Vympel R-27 air-to-air missiles, worth about \$ 218 million. Furthermore, it signed a \$ 700 million agreement for the supply of 300 R-73 "AA-11 Archer" short-range air-to-air missiles and 400 medium-range RVV-AE air-to-air missiles (export version of the R-77 "AA-12 Adder")¹⁹. We also report the recent intergovernmental agreement (\$ 3.3 billion) for the Indian purchase of a third nuclear-powered attack submarine, Akula class, which will be called Chakra-3 and will replace Chakra-2²⁰. Furthermore, Russia and India have developed weapons systems through joint ventures: most recently the next generation of the (supersonic) cruise missile BrahMos-NG, jointly conceived by the Russian NPO Mashinostroyeniya and the Indian Defense Research and Development Organization through the joint venture BrahMos Aerospace Limited²¹.

In perspective, another promising market for Russian military exports is the Middle East, especially towards those states once linked to the Soviet Union. Among these actors, Egypt has recently signed a contract for over \$ 2 billion which involves the purchase of 20 Sukhoi Su-35 fighters, 4++ generation (Flanker-E), which adds to the previous Egyptian acquisitions of dozens of MiGs - 29, Ka-52K helicopters and coastal defence units. Algeria also increased its import of Russian weapons by 66% in the 2014-2018 period²², confirming this trend in 2019 with the recent purchase of another 16 units of the Su-30MKA fighter and 14 units of the MiG-29M/M2, for a total of almost \$ 2 billion²³. Among the other relevant importers of Russian armaments, there are Indonesia (Su-35), Iraq (T-90) and Vietnam (T-90).

17 "India's Russian Arms Purchases Hit 'Breakthrough' \$14.5Bln, Official Says", *The Moscow Times*, 05/09/2019 (<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/09/05/indias-russian-arms-purchases-hit-breakthrough-145bln-official-says-a67153>).

18 "Moscow, New Delhi Discuss Production of S-400 Air Defence System in India - Rostec CEO", *Sputnik*, 16/09/2019 (<https://www.uryl.it/32wm5>).

19 Maurizio Sparacino, "L'India acquista in Russia mille missili aria-aria a medio raggio R-27", *Analisi Difesa*, 20/09/2019 (<https://www.analisedifesa.it/2019/09/lindia-acquista-in-russia-mille-missili-aria-aria-a-medio-raggio-r-27/>).

20 "India, Russia Ink \$3.3 Billion Deal for Third Russian Nuclear Submarine – Source", *Sputnik*, 07/03/2019 (<https://sputniknews.com/military/201903071073032530-india-russia-submarine-lease/?fbclid=IwAR1PkgW5dWD31bqaGQZJxANNWr-D1Muqfez4fARcEJHvpkN-ZoiCckvoZ-s>).

21 "Russia-India BrahMos JV may start next-generation cruise missile's tests in 4-5 years", *TASS*, 28/08/2019 (<https://tass.com/defense/1075438>).

22 Alexey Khlebnikov, "Russia looks to the Middle East to boost arms exports", *Middle East Institute*, 08/04/2019 (<https://www.mei.edu/publications/russia-looks-middle-east-boost-arms-exports>).

23 "Algeria orders more Su-30, MiG-29 fighters from Russia", *DefenceWeb*, 12/09/2019 (<https://www.defenceweb.co.za/aerospace/aerospace-aerospace/algeria-orders-more-su-30-mig-29-fighters-from-russia/>).

China, India and Japan are the main military powers of East and South Asia¹. For this reason, it is essential to monitor the overall quality and specific military capabilities of these nations, evaluating at the same time the existence and the strategic impact of any cooperative agreements they may have signed or any other particularly project.

As always, the country that is generating more concern is the People's Republic of China. The most important initiative to enhance the modernization of the Chinese armed forces are not linked to appropriations, rather to actual technological and operational capacity improvements that the country has recently managed to achieve.

The latest report published by the DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) in the United States is very clear in this regard: the vast modernization effort, which includes the launch of China's first independently developed aircraft carrier in 2019, the continuous development of the Xiang Hong 20 and the emphasis placed on the professionalization of national land forces, has produced "a robust and lethal force with capabilities that span the air, sea, space and information sectors that can help China impose its will in the region"².

This does not mean that Beijing has achieved a military capacity comparable to that of Washington. However, there are areas where the former may soon exceed the latter. The first is that of hypersonic weapons, and in particular with regard to hypersonic sliding vehicles for ballistic missiles. Also, China is already the leader in precision attack capabilities, particularly with medium and long-range ballistic missiles. Finally, the country excels in the development of anti-satellite capabilities, in particular satellite jammer, direct energy weapons, kinetic energy weapons, and dual-use technologies for orbit use.

Another very interesting element of the US report is the comment on China's confidence in the actual capabilities of its armed forces. If on the one hand it is true that the Chinese army has never tested its army, therefore it cannot be sure that its existing capacity can be translated into a real strategic advantage in the field, what the American analysis highlights is the increased confidence of People's Liberation Army generals in the effectiveness of the army. This new trust is worrying Washington for two reasons. First, because it represents a new element compared to the past. Second, it could become a good trigger to convince Beijing to test its men, maybe in Taiwan, given the exponential growth of pro-annexation rhetoric recorded in recent times³.

As for strategic collaborations, China continues to be very selective and to prefer national tests and experiments. At the same time, the country is becoming more active in exporting its military capabilities, especially to countries where it is trying to strengthen the image of China as a reliable and competitive partner. Finally, Beijing has been intensifying the use of national intelligence forces to collect precious secret information needed to reduce the technological capacity gap that continues to distance it from the United States⁴.

Over the last few years, Japan has also shown a clear interest in changing its current approach to defense. The country is bound by its own constitution (Art.9), imposed by the American occupation forces at the end of the Second World War, to renounce the idea of disposing of an autonomous Army. The country has, instead, a "Self-defence force" who is restrained from

1 Global Firepower – Strength in Numbers website: <https://www.globalfirepower.com/>

2 Tara Copp, Aaron Mehta, "New defense intelligence assessment warns China nears critical military milestone", *Defence News*, 15 January 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/news/your-military/2019/01/15/new-defense-intelligence-assessment-warns-china-nears-critical-military-milestone/>

3 *Ibid.*

4 "An Interactive Look at the U.S.-China Military Scorecard", *Rand*, <https://www.rand.org/paf/projects/us-china-scorecard.html>

conducting offensive operations. The offensive capacity is granted to American troops that are still stationed in the territory. The Shinzo Abe government has worked hard to revive the debate on the need to abandon this anachronistic model to allow Japan to equip itself with efficient and competitive armed forces. Unfortunately, this change continues to be opposed by a pacifist civil society. However, their attitude is neglecting the negative impact of Art.9 on Japan's security considering the existence of crucial external strategic threats: the military strengthening of China and its growing assertiveness on the whole Asian territory, and the less credible US commitment to military support Japan in case of crisis, especially during the Trump administration⁵.

Japan finds itself in a very singular situation such that it cannot afford to reform the Constitution by proposing the repeal of Article 9, but it may try to give the current self-defence forces "an offensive posture" to cope with the challenges coming from a region that is becoming more and more unstable⁶.

There are four policies confirming this orientation. First, the country will invest 245 billion dollars in the defense sector over the next five years, 11 percent more than in the previous five years. This investment corresponds to 1% of the national GDP, and exceeds what France and England normally spend on defense⁷. Second, Tokyo is trying to acquire offensive capabilities. It is developing a maritime attack force, building an aircraft carrier, buying 147 F-35s, acquiring carriers that can reach long distances, and developing JASSM-ER, a cruise missile that can be fired from a warplane and can travel over 900 km, which is the distance that separates Okinawa from Shanghai. Third, the Air Force has allocated \$ 240 million to invest in monitoring satellites and space probes. Researchers such as Paul Kallender and Christopher Hughes have calculated that this investment advertised as "dual-use" generates a further 10 percent increase in the overall defense budget⁸. Finally, over the course of five years, Tokyo has set itself the goal of enhancing its cyber-security capabilities, and in particular cyber-offensive capacity, but no budget for this project has yet been confirmed. What is certain is that this development will further increase the overall defense budget. Regarding Japan strategic alliances, despite the difficulties that have emerged over the last few months, Tokyo main partner remains Washington⁹.

India is another special case. Despite its enormous number of personnel, the Indian army suffers from a profound lack of funds and capacities in relation to equipment and investments¹⁰. Accordingly, despite Modi aggressive tones and military posture, it is realistic to imagine that there will be very few changes in terms of national military choices and capabilities in the years to come.

At the beginning of February, the government announced a defense budget of about \$ 42 billion (whose majority has been allocated for the Air Force). This budget was explicitly linked to the need to cope with "border threats and any other strategic problems". However, this is a budget only slightly higher than the one that has been allocated before. Therefore, it remains largely insufficient to even trigger the modernization process the Indian Army urgently needs¹¹.

5 Tara Copp, "Japan surges new weapons, military roles to meet China's rise", *Military Times*, 15 January 2019, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/2019/01/15/japan-surges-new-weapons-military-roles-to-meet-chinas-rise/>

6 "Japan's Self-Defence Forces are beginning to focus on China", *The Economist*, 17 April 2019, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/04/17/japans-self-defence-forces-are-beginning-to-focus-on-china>

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 "Japan Is Reassessing Its Military Power as U.S.-Japan Alliance Is Tested, Writes Sheila Smith in New Book", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 1 April 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/news-releases/japan-reassessing-its-military-power-us-japan-alliance-tested-writes-sheila-smith-new>

10 Ameya Kelkar, "What the defence budget 2019 says about the Indian Army", *Observer Research Foundation*, 15 February 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/what-the-defence-budget-2019-says-about-the-indian-army-48210/>

11 Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "Why India's New Defense Budget Falls Short", *The Diplomat*, 9 February 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/why-indias-new-defense-budget-falls-short/>

The extreme backwardness of Indian military capabilities is inevitably downsizing the real impact of Modi's nationalist discourse on the entire region¹².

¹² Harsh V. Pant, "Opinion | We need not whine about India's small defence budget", *Live Mint*, 10 July 2019, <https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/opinion-india-s-non-debate-on-defence-1562750138136.html>

Today, the Latin American industrial world seems to be facing a very important crossroads. On the one hand, there are development models that intend to promote the economy thanks to a "crecimiento hacia adentro", inward economic growth, which tends to stimulate national production artificially through the imposition of customs duties. On the other hand, some models of development that move in the opposite direction have emerged. In fact, these try to connect national productive activities with global economic trends. The idea is that sustainable development in the long run must pass through a virtuous dialogue with global economic trends. While the first model, to date, seems to be in crisis, the second shows some successful traits. All in an economic context that moves with difficulty. In fact, the World Bank has repeatedly revised down the region's growth prospects, which to date stand at 0.9% for the current year¹.

Even the military industry in Latin America suffers from this scenario albeit with its own characteristics. First, there must be a decrease in the flow of arms imports to the region. As shown by the data collected by the International Peace Research Institute of Stockholm in the Sipri Yearbook, the global share of arms imports for the American region (which includes the entire continent) for the 2014-2018 four-year period corresponds to only 6.2% of the whole global market. In this sense, the American area experienced a decrease in the 2014-2018 period of 36% of arms imports compared to the previous four-year period².

Secondly, a further peculiar feature of the Latin American military industry emerges, which breaks the dichotomy "development inward / internationalization" that emerged from the two development models. This is the development of joint ventures between companies of different nationalities. In this sense, one can read the collaboration between the French Naval Group and the Brazilian Itaguaí Construções Navais for the construction of a new nuclear-powered submarine, the Riachuelo, whose delivery is scheduled for 2029³. A similar example is that of collaboration between Mexico (with the State company ASTIMAR) and Holland (Damen Shipyards) for the construction of two large military ships⁴. Another example is the one between the Colombian COTECMAR and the Honduras Marine for the construction of two naval interceptors, a joint venture that had already developed for the construction of the 'Gracias a Dios' boat⁵. Nevertheless, there are some military agreements that pursue purely political ends. In this regard, one can just think of the constant financing by Russia and China of the Venezuelan armed forces, which in

1 Banco Internacional de Reconstrucción y Fomento, *¿Como afecta el ciclo económico a los indicadores sociales en América Latina y el Caribe? Cuando los sueños enfrentan la realidad*, Washington, Banco Mundial, aprile 2019 [available on line at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31483/9781464814143.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y>, last access 6/10/2019].

2 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Sipri Yearbook, 2019. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Stoccolma, 2019. On this webpage one can see an interesting abstract: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/yb19_summary_ita.pdf [last access 3/10/2019], pp. 8-9.

3 P. Olivares, *Brasil take first step program to join nuclear-powered sub club*, in «Reuters.com», 14/12/2018 [available on line at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-submarine/brazil-take-first-step-in-program-to-join-nuclear-powered-sub-club-idUSKBN1OD2CV>, last access 6/10/2019].

4 *Damen Shipyards de Holanda construirá una cuarta patrullera Damen Stan Patrol 4207 para la Armada de México*, in «Infodefensa», 19/09/2013 [available on line at <https://www.infodefensa.com/latam/2013/09/19/noticia-damen-shipyards-de-holanda-construira-una-cuarta-patrullera-damen-stan-patrol-4207-para-la-armada-de-mexico.html>, last access 6/10/2019].

5 *Honduras paga \$13,5 millones por buque a Colombia*, in «El Heraldo», 27/11/2016 [available on line at <https://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1021623-466/honduras-paga-135-millones-por-buque-a-colombia>, last access 6/10/2019].

recent years, given the worsening of the economic and political crisis, has suffered a significant decline⁶.

At the same time, the presence of joint ventures does not exclude the existence of national military development projects. Look, for example, at the FAdeA (Fábrica de Aviones Argentinos) which completed the construction of a series of aircraft for the national aeronautics. Or, one can see the case of the Brazilian company Helibras which continues to build helicopters for the Brazilian armed forces.

Even with its peculiarities, the Latin American military industry suffers from the political and economic momentum of the area. The definitive decline of autarkic and closed economic models has not yet been completed. Just as the definitive affirmation of an internationalist economic model has not yet taken place. The result is an extremely fluid situation also for the development of the military industry. Not only for countries that aspire to lead the region (such as Brazil, Mexico or Venezuela) but also for intermediate powers.

⁶ *¿Cómo está el poderío militar en América Latina?*, in «El Espectador», 5/03/2019 [available on line at <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/el-mundo/como-esta-el-poderio-militar-en-america-latina-articulo-843382>, last access 6/10/2019].

The development of the defence industry represents a factor of extreme weakness and vulnerability for the ASEAN countries, due to the existing deep imbalance between military spending and the capacity of the national arms industries to meet the growing domestic demand in terms of modern equipment and high-technology weapons.

As noted by SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), in the last decade Southeast Asian countries have considerably increased their military spending (+38% in the period 2008-2017), which amounted to \$41.9 billion.¹ It is also significant to highlight that seven ASEAN countries (this regional bloc included ten countries) are among the first fifty countries in the world for military spending: Indonesia and Vietnam respectively rank at 10th and 11th place, then Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Philippines and Malaysia.²

The combination between the worsening disputes which involve China and some ASEAN countries in the South China Sea and the threat of the Islamic terrorism fomented by the activism of the local cells linked to the so-called Islamic State are among the main reasons which explain the growing militarization of the region: as a matter of fact, to fight against them it is necessary to dispose of high-technology weapons and a high-level training.³

However, the need to modernize the national military equipment and to meet this growing demand of modern armaments - strongly supported by huge military spending - cannot be satisfied by the national industries of the ASEAN countries, which have to turn to international producers to import modern weaponries. This situation determines a condition of deep imbalance linked to the dependence on imports, which also slows down and hampers the development of a national defence industry. The huge financial flows currently allocated to buy weapons abroad could be reoriented to these national defence industries, which could invest them in research, development activities and to strengthen the military apparatus.

There is a strong intention of the ASEAN countries to lessen their reliance on weapons' imports, with the aim to develop a competitive and modern local production chain able to attract international investments, which will allow stimulating an endogenous production of weapons, through the creation of international partnerships, which will generate positive benefits on the national industry and society.⁴

This approach has been widely debated during the ASEAN annual summit in Bangkok (June 2019), where the representatives of the Southeast Asian countries expressed their shared exigence to move forward a research and development cooperation plan in defence and security issues and in the production sector. During the ASEAN Defence Industry Collaboration meeting the countries identified four specific sectors to promote a profitable cooperation: the implementation of joint research and development (R&D) activities for the production of military vehicles; collaboration on shipbuilding and maritime industry sectors; the promotion of exchange visits between regional defence establishments; and cooperation in industry and R&D training and education programmes.⁵ Moreover, Thailand and Myanmar agreed to work together on defence-related computer engineering. Thailand's Deputy Defence Minister pointed out the relevance for

1 SIPRI, *SIPRI Yearbook 2018, Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, p.155

2 Ibidem, p.200

3 Fabio Indeo, *Il rafforzamento dello strumento militare di molte nazioni in termini qualitativi e quantitativi. Un punto di situazione. Pacifico*, Osservatorio Strategico 2019– Anno XXI n. III, pp. 85-87

4 The European House Ambrosetti, *Position Paper Aerospace, Defense And Security as Drivers for Growth and Technological Progress: Opportunities for Italy and Asean Countries Cooperation*, 2017, https://www.ambrosetti.eu/wp-content/uploads/ASEAN-2017-Paper-AEROSPACE_eng_sito.pdf

5 Jon Grevatt, *ASEAN advances defence co-operation projects*, Jane's Defence Weekly, June 20, 2019, <https://www.janes.com/article/89412/asean-advances-defence-co-operation-projects>

ASEAN members to share knowledge and expertise about the defence industry.⁶ United States, Russia, China and some EU member states are the main weapons suppliers for the Southeast countries. According to Giuliani, the European arms industries are able to meet the specific needs expressed by ASEAN countries in their security and defence policies, mainly supporting the enhancement of the navies and air forces and supplying them with modern submarines, missile defence systems and ballistic missiles.⁷ Among the EU countries, France certainly is the main weapons supplier for ASEAN countries: in the last years, France signed important contracts with Indonesia (delivery of submarines), Malaysia (frigates), Thailand (delivery of transport helicopters) and Singapore (helicopters and missiles).⁸ Concerning Italy, Leonardo Company was able to obtain an important contract with Philippines Navy and in 2018; this Italian firm delivered two models of helicopters Augusta Westland AW159: furthermore, between 2016 and 2018 Italy provided several helicopters to Thailand.⁹

Considering the security threats and the potential regional instability linked to the disputes and territorial claims on the South China Sea, the modernization and the reinforcement of the military navies represents a strategic priority for ASEAN countries. In this perspective, the development of an industrial military cooperation with Japan, South Korea and Australia would allow to Southeast Asian countries to benefit of modern weapons and technologies, implementing a strategy of diversification of their military equipment's providers, with respect to the traditional providers (EU member states, Russia, China). These Asian countries have the capacity to realize important investments, sophisticated research and development capabilities, and are capable of large-scale naval production programs (producing guard coast patrol vessels and submarines).¹⁰ There is the possibility to establish a profitable relation based on the complementarity between ASEAN nations and regional weapons suppliers because Australia, Japan and South Korea could contribute to realize a regional system of industrial cooperation in the defence sphere, which will allow to increase (qualitatively and numerically) skilled workforce also in Southeast Asia, through the creation of advanced manufacturing bases and military technological capabilities, aimed at boosting national programs to create a national military industry.¹¹ The bilateral cooperation between Indonesia and South Korea in the defence and shipbuilding sector is a concrete and significant example: South Korean firms Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering and Hanjin Heavy Industries are cooperating with some Indonesian shipyards to build landing platforms for helicopters and submarines.¹²

Concerning Australia, the main aim of the Canberra government is to strengthen the defence national industry so that Australia can satisfy the domestic request of modern and high-technology weapons by 2028, reducing the dependence on imports (submarines, fighter aircrafts, armoured vehicles) - mainly from the US and EU countries – and achieving the ambition to export aircrafts and other military assets.¹³ The possibility to allocate sizeable portions of the national budget to develop the research and development sector and to endorse national industries would allow

6 Wassana Nanuam, *Military R&D pact gets the nod*, The Bangkok Post, June 21, 2019, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1698760/military-rd-pact-gets-the-nod>

7 Benedetta Giuliani, *Il commercio militare UE-ASEAN*, IRIAD Review, no.8, Agosto 2019, p.17

8 Ibidem, pp.18-22

9 Ibidem, p.22; "Finmeccanica: due elicotteri AW159 per la Marina Filippina", *Analisi Difesa*, 31 Marzo 2016, <https://www.analisedifesa.it/2016/03/finmeccanica-due-elicotteri-aw159-per-la-marina-delle-filippine/>

10 Sukjoon Yoon, *New Opportunities For maritime modernization*, Indo Pacific Forum, February 28, 2019, <http://apdf-magazine.com/new-opportunities-for-maritime-modernization/>

11 Ibidem

12 Franz-Stefan Gady, *Indonesia, South Korea Ink \$1 Billion Contract for 3 Diesel-Electric Submarines*, The Diplomat, April 15, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/indonesia-south-korea-ink-1-billion-contract-for-3-diesel-electric-submarines/>

13 Stew Magnuson, *Australia Makes Moves to Grow its Defense Industry*, National Defense, April 29, 2019, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2019/4/29/australia-makes-moves-to-grow-its-defense-industry>

Australia to achieve its ambitious goal: the autarchy of its domestic defence industry. About the industrial production of military assets, an Australian company is currently engaged to build 54 naval military vehicles, including boats and 12 attack submarines, but there is a concrete fear that these will be technologically obsolete when the launch is expected, in 2030.¹⁴

¹⁴ Andrew Green, *Australia's new fleet of submarines could be 'obsolete' when they come into service in 2030s*, ABC News, July 13, 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-13/australian-submarines-could-be-obsolete-in-2030s/11306226>

FOCUS

Many countries are strengthening their military apparatus in terms of quality and quantity: the stock situation in Latin America

The data published, since last May onwards, by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri) revealed a substantial increase in military expenditures worldwide. Spending in 2018 increased, even after 2017, for a sum equal to 1.8 trillion dollars, which corresponds to a growth of 2.6% compared to the value of the previous year. The Latin American Countries have not only accompanied, but rather supported this expansion: while the area of Central America and the Caribbean has increased these expenses by 8.8%, in South America the data stopped at 3.1%. Both data are significantly above the world average¹.

This growth, however, must be put in dialogue with the economic data of the area. If the economies of two large economies in the region, such as Argentina and Venezuela, show the features of a heavy recession, for a good part of Latin America the economic performances are positive, according to figures released by the World Bank (WB). In fact, the data coming from Brazil (+ 1.1%), Chile (+ 4.0%), Colombia (+ 2.7%), Mexico (+ 2.0%), Peru (+4.0%) and Uruguay (+ 1.6%) are different. In this sense, the WB data reveal a substantial stability in the part of public expenditure dedicated to military and defense expenditures which remains, in recent years, always around 1.2%².

In this perspective, therefore, the research of Global Firepower, which from year to year draws up an index, the PowerIndex (PwrIdx) able to establish the offensive capacity of each country (taking only conventional armaments into analysis) is not surprising. According to PwrIdx, Brazil is the only Latin American state to be present in the top fifteen ranking positions. Mexico, in second place at the regional level, ranks 34th in the world. Argentina followed in 38th place, Peru and Venezuela, respectively at 42nd and 43th. The variations compared to the previous year seem to be limited (Brazil, for example, moved from the seventeenth position to the thirteenth)³.

All the data shown, in short, reveal a substantial stability of the area in military expenditure management. A stability due, in particular, to the absence of military conflicts. Except for the Farc conflict (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) in Colombia that re-opened only a few months ago, Latin America has experienced a scenario of substantial tranquility from the military point of view in recent years. A stability, however, that hides the increase in expenditure towards the police and the police. It can be seen, in fact, that in the main Latin American countries public spending on security has increased in the period between 2008 and 2015⁴. This seems to respond to the growing concern for the ruling class and Latin American citizenship towards the increase of internal conflicts and the social and security problems that can come from them. If, on the one hand, military issues remain marginal in national debates (and as a result military spending remains unchanged) that for internal security is greatly increased. And not only. The data released last November by the Chilean polling agency Latinobarómetro show a decline in

1 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Sipri Yearbook, 2019. Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Stoccolma, 2019. The entire text of this report will be published in the next days. It is available now an interesting abstract: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/yb19_summary_ita.pdf [last access 30/08/2019].

2 For the Gross Domestic Product data in Latin American Countries, one can see: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2018&locations=ZJ&most_recent_value_desc=false&start=2009&view=chart [last access 30/08/2019].

3 For an exhaustive report on this ranking, one can see: <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing-latin-america.asp> [last access 30/08/2019].

4 A. Izquierdo, C. Pessino, G. Vuletin (eds.), *Mejor gasto para mejores vidas. Cómo América Latina y el Caribe puede hacer más con menos*, Washington, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2018, p. 228.

confidence in the Armed Forces which corresponds to a relative stability of confidence in the police forces⁵.

In conclusion, a separate discussion deserves the case of Venezuela. To the armed forces, in fact, a good part of the ministers of the executive of Nicolás Maduro belong. Nonetheless, the economic crisis that the country has been experiencing for a decade has greatly affected the management of military spending. Indeed, over the past five years, military spending has fallen by 71%⁶.

5 Corporación Latinobarómetro, *Informe 2018*, Santiago de Chile, noviembre 2018, pp. 49-50 [available on line at <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latNewsShow.jsp>, last access 30/08/2019].

6 J.J. Aznarez, «El enigma militar en Venezuela», in *El País*, 22/02/2019 [available on line at https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/01/21/opinion/1548074959_223164.html, last access 30/08/2019]; «Gasto militar mundial sube por segundo año consecutivo y en Venezuela baja», in *Efecto Cocuyo*, 29/04/2019 [available on line at <https://efectococuyo.com/politica/gasto-militar-mundial-sube-por-segundo-ano-consecutivo-y-en-venezuela-baja-2018/#>, last access 30/08/2019].

US initiatives in the Western Balkans

In autumn 2019 the US administration is strengthening its political and diplomatic posture in the area of South Eastern Europe and the Black Sea, a development that deserves to be taken into consideration. The visit of the Secretary of State Pompeo to Montenegro, North Macedonia and Greece and the appointment of the US special envoy for Kosovo may open a new phase of US involvement in the region, implicitly recognizing that they have long neglected political developments in the region. The strategy to rely mostly on EU soft power after the Balkan wars appears to be abandoned due to the geopolitical hesitations of Europe and the consolidation of Russian, Turkish and Chinese interests in the Western Balkans.

These countries have different interests and strategies and are driven by a competition / collaboration approach. The cooperative approach among them emerges especially when US pursue a policy of disengagement as well as when EU shows its weakness in geopolitical posture. Pompeo's visit and the appointment of a special representative for Kosovo mark, at least diplomatically, a change of pace in Washington's interest in the region.

The visit of the Secretary of State Pompeo

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has carried out a long mission in southern Europe visiting Italy, Greece, Northern Macedonia and Montenegro. The visit to the Balkans was concentrated on three neighboring countries, Greece, Northern Macedonia and Montenegro. Greece and Montenegro are NATO members while Northern Macedonia, after the resolution of the dispute over the name with Athens, has unblocked its process and could await a possible invitation to join the Atlantic Alliance. However, both Montenegro and Northern Macedonia are internally divided on their foreign policy posture, preferring a close relationship with Belgrade or Moscow to the path toward Euro-Atlantic integration. The support from Washington to the pro-Atlantic leadership of these countries thus appears to be linked to a diplomatic action aimed at preventing Russia from fueling the existing political rifts in these countries belonging to the Orthodox cultural area and therefore historically inclined to gravitate towards Belgrade and Moscow. Obviously the expansion of NATO in the Balkans is a matter of a certain sensitivity for Moscow, which has repeatedly spoken out against further enlargement of NATO in the region. The fact that Northern Macedonia and Montenegro are divided by Kosovo is not negligible, and remains another issue of disagreement between the US and Russia in the Balkan region and is the subject of further diplomatic action carried out by the US.

The appointment of the new special envoy for the Western Balkans

The American government has proceeded to appoint Matthew Palmer as special US envoy for the Western Balkan region, which is the area that also includes the countries covered by the visit of State Secretary Pompeo. In addition to the stabilization of Montenegro and Northern Macedonia, the two countries in the region subject to the recent and forthcoming expansion of NATO, the priority for the US envoy to the Balkans remains stabilizing and possibly solving the Kosovo dossier. This implies the resumption of the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo and in particular the removal of some problems between Belgrade and Pristina that can prevent the normalization of relations. The failure to solve the problems of Kosovo and the survival of a latent conflict are capable to destabilize relations among NATO countries of the region, but also to prevent the normalization of relations with Belgrade. Numerous are the points of the dispute between Belgrade and Pristina that the US envoy will have to deal with.

Among them:

- *The non-recognition of Kosovo by Serbia*; this is the main regional problem that cannot be solved in the short term given the opposition of the majority of Serbs in supporting this hypothesis and the constitutional constraints that prevent recognition by the government. The survival or end of the UN Mission in Kosovo UNMIK is also connected to the international status of Kosovo.
- *The establishment of the Kosovo Armed Forces*; the intention of the Kosovo government of proceeding further towards the creation of an Armed Forces in Kosovo; this development at the moment seems to be contrary to the opinion of NATO itself, that guarantees the external and internal security of the country. The Serbian minority of Kosovo is obviously against the idea of creating a Kosovo army.
- *Disputes of sovereignty*; the Serbian government claims ownership of numerous industrial complexes and resources in Kosovo, in particular those located in the northern part of the former Yugoslav province or those that have been built with loans from the World Bank of which Serbia has continued to pay even after the loss of control over Kosovo. The Trepca mines and the industrial establishments located in the Serbian part of Mitrovica are among the most significant.
- *Protection of Serbian minorities in Kosovo*; in Kosovo there are about 120,000 Serbs, especially concentrated in the area of Mitrovica and in other southern municipalities. Their municipal lives is organized and financed by Belgrade creating several non-contiguous de facto enclaves. They are communities on which the Albanian government in fact can hardly exercise its sovereignty. The attempt to link these non-neighboring municipalities into a territorial entity with autonomous powers inside the Kosovo state has not for the moment found a political consensus, with Pristina fearing that this could be a sort of counter-secession. The model to which the Kosovo Serbs are inspiring is a model similar to that existing in the Republic of Srpska compared to the central government of Sarajevo.
- *Serbian parallel institutions in Kosovo*; especially in the north of the province a parallel administration of Serbian communities has been created that are self-organized and supported by Belgrade. In fact, the continuity of the Belgrade government over the Serbian territories north of the Ibar river has never failed despite the proclamation of Kosovo's independence and the establishment of Pristina's control of the borders with Serbia.
- *Trade war*; Pristina has imposed punitive tariffs on goods originating from Serbia, accusing Belgrade of undermining the stability of Kosovo and other actions aimed at not recognizing its independence.

The situation between Belgrade and Pristina appears to be unsustainable for the stability of the region and the US correspondent Palmer will mainly work on this aspects of a 20 years old dossier.

The attacks to the Saudi oil premises

Two Saudi oil facilities, Abqaiq and Khurais, on September 14 were attacked by 20 drones and cruise missiles from the north/north-west and hit 17 targets. The claim came from Yemen's Houthi rebels that threatened further attacks.

Riyhad estimates in few weeks the recovery time of regular production, which suffered a decrease of more than 50%, offset by the OPEC reserves. However, the United States offered to offset the missing quota to keep the world price of crude oil at its current level (a lesson learned in the 1973 crisis). This would be the biggest production breach in history. The daily supply reduction by 5% on the crude oil market immediately caused a price increase of 19.5%¹ (at the closure of the Brent it dropped to 14.6%), a circumstance that occurred in the past in 1990 due to the Saddam Hussein invasion of Kuwait, with declines recorded also on other titles.

Riyadh and Washington immediately accused of the attack² Tehran that continued to deny any involvement, even in the following weeks, bringing it back to the Yemenis³.

This attack, unique in its severity and consequences, is part of the series begun in May 2019 (see figure) and in the context of increased tension in the Persian Gulf area. This is due to the deterioration of Washington-Tehran relations, starting with the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018 (see Persian Gulf, Strategic Observatory No. 1, 2018 and No. 2, 2019). In recent months, Western allies' troops and armaments flew to the Gulf to face the perceived Iranian threat that is strong of its submarine fleet, cyber-attack capabilities and proxies - Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria, Hamas in Gaza and the Shiite militias in Iraq.

At the beginning of September, after three years of postponements, Riyadh announced the upcoming stock exchange listing of Saudi Aramco - IPO, Initial Public Offering - that could suffer repercussions from the attacks. Recently, King Salman had appointed his son Abdulaziz bin Salman new Minister of Energy and Yasir al-Rumayyan Chairman of Aramco. The real value of the company has long been at the center of disputes: while Mohammad bin Salman, crown prince and Minister of Defense, argued that the value stands at \$ 2 trillion, Bloomberg Intelligence stated it at 1.1 and other analysts favor instead 1.5⁴.

Saudi Aramco's listing on the stock exchange has important legal implications regarding the proceeding admitted by the New York district judge for the class action brought by the families of 9/11 victims: since 15 of the 19 terrorists were Saudis, in the event of a sentence for compensation Saudi Aramco's assets would be at risk.

The Aramco listing on the stock exchange is the cornerstone of the Saudi Arabia⁵ plan "Vision 2030" which aims to innovate, modernize, attract foreign capital and above all diversify the

1 "Brent crude oil jumps the most in history after Saudi attacks", CNBC, Sep 16, 2019; <https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/15/us-crude-oil-jumps-15percent-after-drone-strikes-disrupt-saudi-crude-production.html>.

2 "Saudi oil attacks: US says intelligence shows Iran involved", BBC News, 16 September 2019; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49712417>.

3 "Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels threaten new attacks on Saudi Arabian oil sites", South China Morning Post, 16 Sep 2019; <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/middle-east/article/3027529/yemens-iran-back-houthi-rebels-threaten-new-attacks-saudi>.

4 "Sale of 1% of Aramco May Equal a Decade of Saudi IPOs", Bloomberg, 12 Sept 2019; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-12/aramco-1-stake-sale-may-equal-a-decade-of-saudi-ipo-proceeds>.

5 P. Sabga, "Khashoggi to Aramco attacks: Saudi 'Vision 2030' clouded by risks", AlJazeera, 1 Oct 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/khashoggi-aramco-attacks-saudi-vision-2030-clouded-risks-191001024541062.html>.

Saudi Arabian economic system dependence - with a distorted development pattern - from crude oil, as it is a rentier state⁶. The attacks could discourage investors and postpone the IPO even further.

The attacks occurred precisely when some signs of *détente* with Iran occurred, such as the arrival at the G7 in Biarritz last August of the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif; the French announcement of the probable opening of a credit of \$ 15 billion for Tehran - opposed by the National Security Advisor Bolton (inclined to a military attack on Iran) fired on September 10; the willingness expressed by President Trump, who wants to avoid an escalation⁷ considering his running for the second term⁸, to meet President Rouhani on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in late September.

For Iran, the persistence of sanctions is an act of war, and the sanctioning regime in the context of the "maximum pressure" US strategy does not make possible at the moment to engage in any dialogue. Tehran relies on President Trump's electoral needs - "*get the boys back home*" is a cornerstone for his re-election - and he hopes to regain bargaining power should a negotiation take place. President Rouhani's line is that Washington is using pretexts to reaffirm its presence in the Persian Gulf area to protect its strategic interests - referring to the hypothesis of sending a European-led naval mission. As part of the UN General Assembly meeting, President Rouhani reaffirmed Tehran's absolute extraneousness to the attacks, proposing a naval mission under the UN umbrella, operated by the Gulf states, without missing the opportunity to accuse the Europeans of disregarding the JCPOA.

The risk of an imminent war has receded with the reassuring dispatch to Riyadh of additional American troops for defensive and deterrent purposes⁹ (200 men and 2 batteries of Patriot missiles¹⁰). Right now, the only mediator between the contenders is President Macron¹¹, since Iran categorically refuses to speak directly with the United States. The main actors hold decidedly rigid positions: President Trump does not want and cannot afford a war (both for overstretching of the forces and for looming elections) and does not allow the reduction of the tension that he triggered leaving the JCPOA (however, visas were issued to Rouhani and Zarif for the UN Assembly).

President Rouhani has significant internal political problems with the hard wing rejecting compromises. Mohammed Bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince, humiliated by his country's revealed vulnerability, suggests that the attack is an act of war¹², while favoring a peaceful solution he reminded to the West that there could be a surge in the crude oil price if no country intervenes against Iran¹³. France, Germany, Great Britain and Israel, on the sidelines of the General

6 A. Hanieh, "Capital, Labor and State: Rethinking the Political Economy of Oil in the Gulf", Oxford Handbooks Online, Aug 2015.

7 "Trump says he would 'certainly like to avoid' war with Iran", Al Jazeera, Sept. 17, 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/trump-avoid-war-iran-190916195626441.html>.

8 "Trump Says Iran Appears Responsible for Saudi Attack but That He Wants to Avoid War", New York Times, Sept. 16, 2019; <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/16/world/middleeast/saudi-oil.html>.

9 Reuters, "United States sending troops to bolster Saudi defenses after attack", September 21, 2019; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-aramco-usa-pentagon/united-states-sending-troops-to-bolster-saudi-defenses-after-attack-idUSKBN1W52K3>.

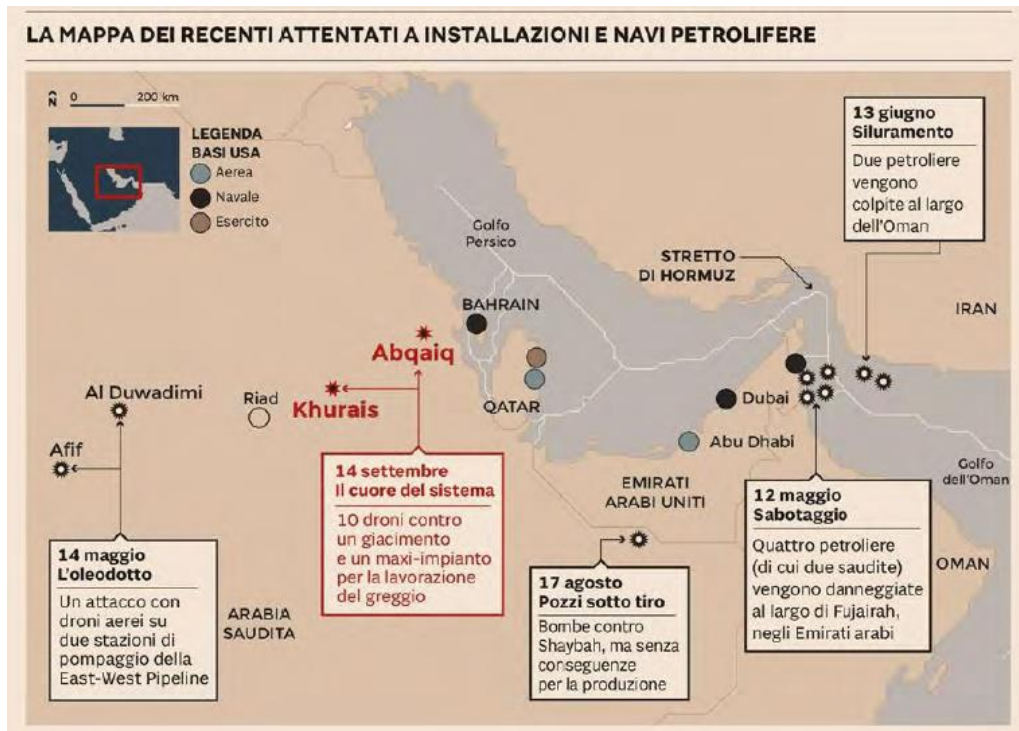
10 A. Macias, "Pentagon to deploy Patriot missile system to Saudi Arabia after Iran oil attacks", CNBC, Sep 26, 2019; <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/09/26/patriot-missile-system-to-saudi-arabia-after-iran-oil-attacks.html>.

11 P. Haski, "A l'ONU, la diplomatie cherche désespérément le chemin de la désescalade avec l'Iran", france inter, 23 septembre 2019; <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/geopolitique/geopolitique-23-septembre-2019>.

12 Reuters, "Saudi Arabia says if attack launched from Iran, it would be an act of war: CNN", September 22, 2019; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-aramco-jubeir/saudi-arabia-says-if-attack-launched-from-iran-it-would-be-an-act-of-war-cnn-idUSKBN1W7055>.

13 BBC, "Saudi crown prince warns of 'Iran threat' to global oil", 30 Sep 2019; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49874807>.

Assembly, have publicly accused Tehran of the attacks, while President Erdogan calls for caution¹⁴.



Source: Il Sole24Ore, 15 september 2019.

14 "Turkey's Erdogan urges caution over blaming Iran for Saudi attack", Al Jazeera, 26 Sep 2019; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/turkey-erdogan-urges-caution-blaming-iran-saudi-attack-190926071934562.html>.

Terrorism: an answer to the drone challenge

Remotely piloted aircrafts (RPAs)¹ witnessed an exponential increase in sales during recent years². Small-sized³ RPAs for photography and videography purposes can now be afforded by an average consumer, as price is akin that of digital cameras with nearly identical specifics⁴. At factory settings, an RPA is equipped with an advanced image-capturing system and presents higher payload capacity, which allows for better stability and manoeuvrability.

At non-altered status it could already be used to infringe privacy and/or no-fly-zone legislation. In the United States, the problem of identifying people responsible for breaking flight law already manifested⁵; in Europe, the cases of drones hovering over Gatwick and Heathrow airports has highlighted their inherent potential to cause confusion and inconveniences⁶.

Geofencing systems⁷, with which RPAs are equipped, have proven fallible. Removing GPS components appears to be a simple process – the drone can then be manoeuvred solely basing on what the integrated image-capturing system transmits. It is also possible to disable the geofencing software through programmes which can be found online⁸ – in some cases, it even appears to be virtually non-existent⁹.

1 Colloquially referred to as “drones” and also known as UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles), UASs (Unmanned Aerial Systems), or – in the Italian version – APRs (Aeromobili a Pilotaggio Remoto).

2 European Commission (2014), “Remotely Piloted Aviation Systems (RPAs) – Frequently Asked Questions”, p. 2 Link: <https://bit.ly/2J2gmX9>
European Aviation Safety Agency (2016). “Explanatory Note”, *Prototype Commission Regulation on Unmanned Aircraft Regulation*, p. 13. Link: <https://bit.ly/2IZFpKq>

3 RPA Classification

Category	Operative radius (km)	Flight height (m)	Flight duration (h)	MTOW (kg)
Nano	< 1	100	< 1	< 0,0250
Micro	< 10	250	1	< 5
Mini	< 10	150 – 300	< 2	< 30

4 An entry-level Canon reflex, like the EOS 1300D, is sold on the Canon official website at € 470,99. In the same price range fall also cameras from other labels, such as the Nikon D3400. DJi, the Chinese company leader in drone-making, prices its drones from the Phantom and Mavic series between 500 and 1.200 dollars. They are the most sold worldwide. In 2017, DJi held more than 36% of the North American market.

Chandler, C. (2017). “For China's high-flying drone maker, the sky's the limit”, *Fortune*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2vt9BWr>

Glaser, A. (2017). “Dji is running away with the drone market”, *Recode*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2nNlhkd>

5 An example is Casey Neistat's case in Manhattan.

P.A. Aitken (2017) “Copy of FAA message sent. Casey Neistat investigation lacks conclusive evidence”, *Taitkenflight*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2W2f5SY>;

Andy (2017) “EXCLUSIVE: Details of Casey Neistat's FAA investigations”, *Andy's Travel Blog*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2TfKoli>.

6 BBC (2018), “Gatwick airport: Drones ground flights”, *BBC*. Link: <https://bbc.in/2EvX5uW>

BBC (2019), “Heathrow airport drone investigated by police and military”, *BBC*. Link: <https://bbc.in/2Hs4768>

BBC (2019), “Heathrow airport: Drone sighting halts departures”, *BBC*. Link: <https://bbc.in/2RokRAL>

7 “Geo-fencing is the concept of restricting drone access by designating specific areas where the drone's software and/or hardware is designed not to enter, even if the pilot, without intent, instructs the drone to go” European Aviation Safety Agency (2015), “Concept of Operations for Drones...”, *ibidem*.

8 Ryan Whitman (2017) “Russian Company Is Selling Mods to Bypass DJI Drone Safety Features”, *Extreme Tech*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2YCHFj6>

9 Interviews conducted with drone enthusiasts have highlighter how, at the moment in which a DJi drone flies in a no-fly zone proximity, the operator is alerted through a pop-up alert. Accepting the alert, the drone continues to function, and it is yet to be verified if and how the geofencing system would behave. The text of the pop-up alert appearing when using a DJi drone can be found here below —

“**No-Fly Zones.** There are 1 Authorization Zone(s) nearby. Authorization zone type: Military Facility(Military Zones). Your aircraft may experience RTH interruption, hovering, or Intelligent Flight Mode cancellation. Please fly with caution. Do you wish to apply for Self-Unlocking to access these zones? No / Yes”

In the Syrian and Iraqi theatres of operations, the first reports regarding use of ‘drones’ or ‘armed drones’ by ISIS¹⁰ date back to 2014. They were used to spy on US and Kurdish lines’ movements during the 2014-2017 battles, to drop explosives, and as ‘kamikaze drones’¹¹. Multiple reasons have allowed ISIS to include RPAs in its arsenal: notably, simplicity in purchasing second-hand products online. Their dimensions and flight altitude rarely trigger radars or protective shields; for the same reasons, they are also difficult to spot or engage by personnel on the ground¹². Tampering with them is uncomplicated, and they can be weaponised in various ways. Last but not least, they can provide images of their activities: videos can be used for propaganda purposes, as has already been the case in late 2017¹³.

RPAs for videography and photography purposes are the type exhibiting the biggest potential to turn into a national security issue. The role of the Defence is fundamental in identifying possible solutions for the short-, medium- and long-term to guarantee the protection of the civilian population. A concerted approach from Armed Forces and Law Enforcement would be desirable¹⁴.

Identifying potentially sensible objectives –harder to determine than critical infrastructure¹⁵– is one of the first problems arising. ‘Covering’ the whole national territory with anti-drone systems is an objective currently lying out of reach for timing, costs and level of technology.

The necessity materialises to develop an integrated, fully automated *search, find and ID* system basing on two main motivations. The technologies presently available on the market do not present a satisfying cost-benefit ratio, considering the investment needed to acquire them; secondly, a fully automated system has the capacity to resist saturation by removing the man-in-the-loop element¹⁶, pre-envisioning future attacks conducted by swarms¹⁷. Particular attention should be paid to rapidity of reaction and intervention, which interconnects with the engagement question.

10 “[ISIS] è un progetto politico di lungo termine con confini mobili [...] Frutto delle idee di Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, proclamato “Califfato” il 29 giugno 2014 da Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, ha ridisegnato la geografia del Medio Oriente cancellando i confini di Iraq e Siria prodotti dagli accordi di Sykes Picot del 1916. Si proietta contro gli stati postcoloniali che sorgono all’interno della mappa di “Bilad al Sham”, la leggendaria nazione araba del Levante che corrisponde agli attuali territori di Iraq, Siria, Giordania, Libano, Israele e Autorità nazionale Palestinese”, cit. M. Molinari (2015), “Il Califfato del terrore. Perché lo Stato Islamico minaccia l’Occidente”, *Rizzoli*, pp. 10-11.

11 Peter Bergen & Emily Schneider (2014) “Now ISIS has drones?”, *CNN*. Link: <https://cnn.it/2SMwMwM>

Ben Watson (2017) “The Drones of ISIS”, *Defense One*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2Ymlus0>

Mike Peshmerganor (2018), *Blood Makes the Grass Grow: A Norwegian Volunteer’s Fight Against the Islamic State*, Independently Published.

12 L. E. Davis et al. (2014) “Armed and Dangerous? UAVs and U.S. Security”, *RAND Corporation*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2LMqWUu>

13 The video hereby referred was circulated on the internet through ISIS-affiliated Amaq agency and spread by ABC News (<https://ab.co/2Ybr6en>). It showed a drone dropping munitions over a Syrian arms depot. Although the author is skeptical regarding the authenticity of the images themselves, the potential for propagandistic use of these technologies remains undeniable. Link to the video: <https://bit.ly/2Yxz9BH>

14 Only two actors appear to be – at the time of writing – equipped with jamming systems in Italy: central Police services, as they are the ones involved in cases of specific necessity; and offices where classified information is discussed, which undergo periodic checks.

15 Legislative Decree n. 61, 11 April 2011, in actualization of Directive 2008/114/CE concerning individuation and designation of European critical infrastructures and evaluation of the necessity to implement their protection.

Legislative Decree, in Italian: <https://bit.ly/2NRjMQj>

European Directive: <https://bit.ly/2Y6pUZ8>

16 “*Human-in-the-loop* (HITL). A model that requires human interaction.” Cit. USA Department of Defense (1998), “DoD Modelling and Simulation (M&S) Glossary”, DOD 5000.59-M, p. 124 (emphasis in the original).

17 “UAV swarms, inspired mainly by the swarms of insects, are groups of small independent unmanned vehicles that coordinate their operations through autonomous communications to accomplish goals as an intelligent group, with or without human supervision. It may be a heterogeneous mix of machines with dissimilar tasks but contributing synergistically to the overall mission objectives”, cit. Puneet Bhalla (2015), “Emerging Trends in Unmanned Aerial Systems”, *Scholar Warrior*, Autumn 2015, p. 89.

The long-term objective should be the development of systems acting upon control algorithms so as to “steal” the drone and land it in a safe zone. The danger, in fact, lies in an RPA armed not only with explosives, but CBRN¹⁸ charges as well. Protocols including the creation of a quarantine zone are needed to safeguard both civilian population and specialised personnel.

Since the development of this system is not achievable in the short-term, existing possibilities need to be analysed on a costs-and-benefits basis. In conducting said analysis, problems relating to the TYPE OF COMMAND used for the drone (whether remotely controlled or with a pre-set route) and the TYPE OF ARMAMENT (whether the release of the charge is activated through the remote control; or automatically when the drone is above certain pre-set coordinates; or with a timer).

There are four possible outcomes. Having lost connection to the remote control, the drone incurs in a mid-air stalemate (is essentially *frozen*), automatically goes back to the last known remote-control position, or lands. If a *failsafe system*¹⁹ is not in place, it crashes to the ground²⁰: in this case, if armed with explosive charges, it could detonate; if armed with CBRN ones, it could contaminate the area.

A first option of anti-drone technology might regard the use of *jammers*, translating their established use as *counter-IED systems*²¹ in conflict areas. Impact on civilian technologies and infrastructures, if used in urban environment, remains to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis²². Considering the relatively short distance and duration of drone flights with malevolent potential, absence of a jamming system *in loco*, whether portable²³ or fixed, could implicate missed engagement. Fixed systems in urban environments present problems regarding background noise, though.

18 Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear.

19 Definitions of “fail-safe” —

(American English): *adj.* “[D]esignating, of, or involving a procedure designed to prevent malfunctioning or unintentional operation [...]”.

(British English): *adj.* “Something that is fail-safe is designed or made in such a way that nothing dangerous can happen if a part of it goes wrong”.

Collins Dictionary, link: <https://bit.ly/2Y98T1j>

20 In summer 2019, during a drone race in Turin, a hacker attack to the organisers’ Wi-Fi made the operators lose control of their drones. This was caused by the fact that all remotely-controlled APRs were operating on the same Wi-Fi network, offered by the organisers – therefore, attacking this infrastructure was a cyberattack which had no direct effect on the drones (it did not intervene on them), but rather broadly speaking on their wireless communication. The causes of the reported “going crazy” of the APRs are to be found in the fact that these were homemade race drones, presumably with no fail-safe system, already launched at high speed at the time they were disconnected from their remote controllers.

Alessandro Contaldo (2019), “Attacco hacker alla drone race: i quadricotteri fuori costretti ad atterraggi di emergenza”, *La Repubblica*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2NPVGv>

21 Here below follow a few definitions —

“An improvised explosive device (IED) is a type on unconventional explosive weapon that can take any form and be activated in a variety of ways. They target soldiers and civilians alike. In today’s conflicts, IEDs play an increasingly important role and will continue to be part of the operating environment for future NATO military operations. NATO must remain prepared to counter IEDs in any land or maritime operation involving asymmetrical threats, in which force protection will remain a paramount priority.” in NATO (2018), *Improvised explosive devices*, www.bit.ly/2Ykd4qb.

“**Electronic Warfare:** The use of electromagnetic (EM) or directed energy to exploit the electromagnetic spectrum. It may include interception or identification of EM emissions (es.: SIGINT), employment of EM energy, prevention of hostile use of the EM spectrum by an adversary, and actions to ensure efficient employment of that spectrum by the user-State. An example of electronic warfare is radio frequency jamming” in Michael N. Schmitt, editor (2016), *Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the international law applicable to cyber operations*, Cambridge University Press, p. 565.

22 The use of (civilian) jammers is legal in Italy, as long as the limits set by law concerning emissions and exposure are respected and they do not cause an interruption of public service (art. 340, Italian Penal Code). Armed Forces and Law Enforcement can use them in exceptional cases, hence when they operate *in deroga* (lit. notwithstanding the current regulation), e.g. for public safety reasons, protection of personalities, public order *et simili*.

23 As could be, e.g., the Wilson handgun jammer.

A second hypothesis would be the use of conventional ballistic weapons with the intent of shooting the drone down, or eventually armed with net projectiles²⁴. This should only be considered as a last resort option, because of the aforementioned risks concerning typology of armament. Undoubtedly, a danger for the civilian population persists if the menace materialises in crowded areas.

A third option would be using predator birds. The reactivity of these animals and their economic impact make them a competitive short-term solution. A falconry nucleus is estimated to have a maximum cost of around fifty thousand euros – that would mean that, with a budget of three million euros²⁵, the installation of circa sixty falconry nuclei could be feasible. The costs for maintaining a single nucleus appear not to be above the few tens of thousands of euros per year²⁶.

A fourth option would involve weapons emitting radio frequencies. The specifics of an American-manufactured system appear quite interesting, yet it falls within the category requiring prior authorisation by the Federal Communications Commission to be sold or rented to non-federal users²⁷.

Lastly, direct-energy systems are increasingly attracting interest: an example would be the Counter Unmanned Aerial System (C-UAS) provided to the Italian Air Force's *Fucilieri, 16° Stormo* during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Rome in July 2019. It was described as a detection system equipped with devices to electronically interdict flight²⁸.

In the short term, the most feasible solution would be the constitution of a pilot experiment using a falconry nucleus to monitor exceptional situations involving a high concentration of people and, if need be, intervene – for example, Sunday Mass at the Vatican or the future Winter Olympics in Milano-Cortina 2026.

Information exchange amongst Armed Forces, intelligence and Law Enforcement should be accentuated. To predict possible future trends, attention should be on alterations, which can be found online, defined as “feasible” by hobbyists, enthusiasts and/or ill-intentioned actors. One should avoid the reasoning by which a possible modification, being it non-functioning, does not represent a future menace: when an idea concerning malevolent use of an RPA is put out, it should be considered as feasible, either in the short-term or in a more distant future.

24 COMFOTER SPT (2018), “Sperimentazione antidrone del COMACA”, *Esercito*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2HeeZnR>
Stato Maggiore Esercito (2018), “Sperimentazione antidrone del COMACA”, *Difesa Online*. Link: <https://bit.ly/32Xf9b5>
Maurizio Tortorella (2019), “Abbattete quel drone”, *Panorama*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2GwHUBE>.

According to indiscretions, these exercises have been conducted using a Beretta rifle, caliber 12.

25 This amount has been chosen on purpose. Apparently, the Israeli ‘Drone Dome’ system, used at Gatwick airport – against the drone which caused the stop of air traffic – costed the United Kingdom 2.6 million pounds (at the moment of writing, equivalent to nearly 2.9 million euros).

Joe Pinkstone (2018), “The £2.6m Israeli ‘Drone Dome’ system that the Army used to defeat the Gatwick UAV after the technology was developed to fight ISIS in Syria”, *Daily Mail Online*. Link: <https://dailym.ai/2T4PKXb>

26 As experts estimated during interviews.

27 Reference is hereby made to the DronekillerTM, a product of IXI Technology. Company website: <https://bit.ly/30ZSOaU>

IXI Technology, document on Dronekiller specifics: <https://bit.ly/2Ykc5ax>

28 “[...] sistema radar di rilevamento munito di dispositivi e ottiche diurne e notturne per l’interdizione elettronica del volo”. Cit. Ministero della Difesa / Stato Maggiore della Difesa (2019), “Le Forze Armate concorrono alla cornice di sicurezza per la visita del Presidente Putin”, *Difesa*. Link: <https://bit.ly/2YzxF4>

All web links indicated in the present document have been last accessed on September 27, 2019.

Acronyms list

ALBM: Air-Launched Ballistic Missile
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia
AQMI: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ATACMS: Army Tactical Missile System
CSDP: Common Security and Defence Policy
DoD. [US] Department of Defense
EC: European Commission
EDF: European Defence Fund
ENACT: Enhancing Africa's ability to Counter Transnational Crime
ERIP: European Recapitalization Incentive Program
EU: European Union
FARC: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FDD: Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (Washington)
GBSD: Ground Based Strategic Deterrent
HGV: Hypersonic Glide Vehicle
ICBM: Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
ICG: International Crisis Group (Bruxelles)
INF: Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
IRBM: Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile
ISPI: Italian Institute for International Political Studies
ISS: Institute of Security Studies (Pretoria)
LNG: liquefied natural gas
LRSO: Long Range Stand-Off Weapon
MUJAO: Movement for Uniqueness and Jihad in West Africa
NDLEA: National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Paris)
PESCO: Permanent Structured Cooperation
R&D: Research & Development
SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SLBM: Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
START: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UA: African Union
UNODC: United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention
UNSOM: United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
US: United States
WHO: World Health Organization



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