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Cameroon: the Anglophone Problem

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Abstract

The outcome of the plebiscite in February 11, 1961 and the deliberations of the Foumban conference established the basis of the union between "the two Cameroons", a once German protectorate that lasted from 1884 to 1916. This reunification left much room for improvement, which culminated to what has come to be known as the Anglophone problem in Cameroon. The Anglophone elites have risen sharply to denounce what they refer to as a Francophone domination in the socio-economic, political, and judicial spheres. This paper attempts therefore a review of the core concerns of the Anglophone problem. It also delineates a constructive conflict management scheme, purported not only to interrogate, gauge previous and existing contributions to this end, but provide relevant inroads on how such a scheme can help incorporate the Anglophone elites to assume a more credible, proactive, and sustainable role in diffusing peacefully the tension, discord, conveying the problem of the SCNC and the government of Cameroon.

Key words: *Kamerun, La Republique du Cameroun, Southern Cameroon, Anglophone community, Southern Cameroon National Council, Paul Biya, United Nations, Kofi Annan.*

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Overview

The modern history of Cameroon was characterized by many phases in motion, beginning with the Berlin West African conference, which led to the colonization of the country by the Germans in 1884. Their stay was short lived, as the First World War saw their defeat and the eventual loss of their former colonies to the victors. Britain and France took over Cameroon as a mandated territory of the League of Nations; for administrative purposes they shared it into two unequal parts. France managed its share of Cameroon as a separate entity, but the British did it as part of their colony of

Nigeria. These mandated territories later became known as UN trust territories after 1945, as the UN took over the responsibilities of the defunct League of Nations. This colonial leadership abruptly came to an end in 1960, when the wind of change blew across the continent and France granted independence to its part of Cameroon under the name *La Republique du Cameroon* in 1960. Unfortunately for British Southern Cameroon, the UN-imposed plebiscite offered only the options of joining Nigeria (integration) or Cameroon (reunification), without the right of gaining independence in their own rights. The outcome of the plebiscite in February 11, 1961, established the basis of the Union between the two Cameroons.

The Anglophone Elites have, over the past years, persistently challenged the 1961 union with La Republique du Cameroun after the 11 February plebiscite and the Foumban conference of 1961, which reunited the two Cameroons. The ideological framework of reunification movement was the German colonization of Cameroon, which lasted from 1884-1916. The German period of colonization in Cameroon might have been too brief to create a profound impact of cohesion and nationhood strong enough to evoke a sense of nationalism in its aftermath, (Ardener, 1967; Johnson, 1970). Nevertheless, their presence left a legacy, a common Kamerun, which constituted the basis for one of the questions in the 1961 plebiscite. The choice for reunification with Cameroun against integration with Nigeria, which became the most preferred option after the option for independence was dropped by the UN, had it roots therefore in the idea of a onetime German Kamerun, as Cameroonians variably desired to return to German territorial frontiers as it was before the First World War.

However, it must be shown that the majority in Southern Cameroon was never in favor of either reunification with Cameroun or integration with Nigeria. Reunification was not an immediate option, even if it was the one that gained ground in the end. Internal opposition to reunification and integration became so intense after the plebiscite question were formulated two months later, to the extent that the Southern Cameroon leaders began considering working away from the plebiscite questions and asking for independence on their own account. The unification was against article 76b of the UN charter, which prescribed the evolution of the trust territories towards self-government and independence. While reunification was very unpopular in Southern Cameroon, John Ngu Foncha, who was the prime minister of the British Cameroon at the time, used reunification as a distant possibility to win the loyalty of the students who were fed up with colonial rule and wanted rapid decolonization. He also used it as an option against the British, who were totally against an independent Southern Cameroon. It was this option that was carefully manipulated at the UN level, to deny Southern Cameroon the chance for independence.

The drop of an independent option for Southern Cameroon at the UN was partially championed by the African bloc that was led by Nkrumah of Ghana, who was infatuated

with the idea of pan Africanism, and did not see any need of any further bifurcation of a continent they were fighting to unite. While the British were outright against independence, they did not also support the idea of reunification; however, at the UN, they could not oppose the plebiscite question of either integration or reunification. To them, the easiest way was to keep Southern Cameroon as part of Nigeria, based on the assumption that Southern Cameroon could not vote for reunification with Cameroun which was going through relative political instability at the time, as a result of the UPC (Union des Populations des Cameroun) armed militancy. Unfortunately, the British didn't take into account the deep frustration of the Southern Cameroon people, caused by being lead from Lagos, as a "colony of a colony", and by the influx of Nigerian people that took the jobs of the locals. More than this, the principal reason for the success of the reunification option was that the ideological factor was never at the center of the minds of the electorates, as in other parts of Africa; rather they made their choices based on ethnic lines of those who represented the options. Foncha, who came from the populated grass fields with the support of traditional leaders, was in favour of reunification.

The next step was to negotiate the terms of reunification with the government of La Republique du Cameroun. Following the results of the plebiscite of February 11-12, 1961, a constitutional conference was held in Foumban on July 17-21, 1961. It brought together political leaders and traditional rulers from the two Cameroons, amongst whom President Ahmadou Ahidjo and Prime Minister of Southern Cameroon John Ngu Foncha. It was aimed at setting the base for legal structures of the future reunified Cameroon. The conference proposed the revision of the La Republique du Cameroun constitution that had already gained independence in 1960. This conference saw the revision and creation of the revised constitution, which was adopted by both assemblies of the two Cameroons and was promulgated on September 1st 1961 as the constitution of the federal Republic of Cameroon. One month later, on 1st October 1961 Cameroonians celebrated the birth of the federal Republic of Cameroon.

Prior to the Foumban conference, the Southern Cameroon delegation had met in June of 1961 in Bamenda to draft a document on how they wanted the new federation to be governed. It was an effort to prepare the Southern Cameroon delegation for the Foumban constitutional negotiations. The general wish of Southern Cameroonians (opposition party CPNC and the party in power KNDP) was to establish a very loose federation with the Francophone brothers.

The Foumban conference reflected instead how the Southern Cameroon delegation was outmanouvered by the Franchophones. Arguably, this happened because the Southern Cameroon delegation had not been presented with the French draft proposal well on time and they only happened to see it on the morning of the negotiations on the 17 of July 1961. Ahidjo and his delegation from la Republique du Cameroun were able to dictate the pace of the negotiation. John Ngu Foncha and his delegation, who wanted a

loose federation, ended up being forced into accepting a very centralized administrative system. The negotiations gave birth to the Federal Republic of Cameroon, a state with two autonomous parts and two official languages.

To Ahidjo, federalism was just a stepping stone into establishing a strong and centralized unitary state. To achieve this, he carefully planned his road map towards a unitary state, first by abolishing all political parties in both regions in 1966, then by imposing his loyalists into offices in Southern Cameroon, replacing Agustin Ngum Jua as prime minister of Southern Cameroon with Solomon T. Muna in 1968, since Muna was pro-unitary government. On May 6, 1972, Ahidjo made known his intention to transform the federal state into a unitary state, a choice people were to make through a referendum on May 20th 1972. This was an absolute violation of the Foumban constitution clause 1 of article 47, which stated clearly that any proposal for the revision of the present constitution which impairs the unity and the integrity of the federation shall be inadmissible. The dictatorial regime of Ahidjo facilitated the votes of the referendum in support of the United Republic of Cameroon. Again worthy of note is the fact that it completely went against the will of the people, considering that clause 3 of the same article 47 stipulated that proposals for adoption shall be considered by a simple majority of the members in the federal assembly provided that this majority constituted a majority of the representatives of each of the federated states.

To add insult to injury, in 1984, Paul Biya, the successor of Ahidjo, changed the name of the country, from the United Republic of Cameroon (1972), to the Republic of Cameroon (La République de Cameroun, in French). Under the pressure of the geopolitical changes that took place at the end of the 1980s, Biya reintroduced the multi-party system and a semblance of democracy. However, because he had absolute control over all political, administrative, economic, and communication levers of power, but also due to widespread cronyism, he (as President), and his party, invariably won the elections.

The Anglophones held the conviction that reunification with Francophone Cameroun in 1961 led to a growing marginalization of the Anglophone population in a country that was predominantly governed by the Francophone elites, which jeopardized their socio-economic and political status, cultural heritage, and identity. While these grievances remained recessive in the early stage of the union, it was not until 1990, with the timid political liberalization engineered by Biya, that the Anglophone Elites began mobilizing against their marginalized nature, demanding a redress of their political stalemates, reintroducing concepts such as federalism and even secession to the political agenda (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003).

The Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) as a social movement was formed out of the failures and frustrations of the Anglophones, after the post-colonial marriage with la Republique du Cameroun in a plebiscite on the 11 of February 1961. After the re-instatement of a multi-party political system by Paul Biya, given the deep political

resentment, it was with little surprise that the first veritable political party in the country was born in the Anglophone Cameroon. The Social Democratic Front (SDF) was founded in 1990 under the leadership of Fru Ndi. It advocated equality, fairness, and an end to Anglophone politico-economic marginalization which had existed for years.

The birth of multi-party politics in post-colonial Cameroon was challenged by the regime in power, on grounds that Cameroon was not mature enough for multi-party politics; most of those who championed the course were seen and described as Nigerians. Renowned la Republique ministers of the time, like Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, made it clear that whoever among the Anglophones was dissatisfied with the system of national unity could relocate elsewhere (Konings, 2003).

The birth of the SDF revived an Anglophone spirit of nationalism which had been passive for years, a revival that turned the Anglophone Community into a breeding ground for protests, demonstrations, agitations advocating for equality in economic and political dispensations. The year 1991/1992 witnessed series of riots that culminated with Bamenda being declared a ghost town, as a result of strike actions orchestrated by SDF demanding for a national conference. There was also the people's frustration in the 1992 presidential elections where the SDF scored 86.3% and 51.6% in NW and SW provinces, respectively. A later proclamation of a CPDM victory in an election where both the national and international observers proclaimed the victory of the opposition sowed the seeds of frustration and bitterness, which led to further acts of violence.

Despite the enormous efforts of the SDF to bring to light what today is referred to as the Anglophone problem, it was later seen to be more of a national rather than an Anglophone party. This was evident in the party's growing interest in Francophone Cameroon. Subsequently, the Anglophone problem came to be represented by associations that were created by the Anglophone elites in the aftermath of political liberalization in 1990. This movement gained greater impetus and was able to market their agenda both at the national and at the international level. It culminated with the first all-Anglophone conferences (AACI and AACII), which brought together the Anglophone architects of the union between the two Cameroons and also prominent Anglophone elites. All these were Anglophone attempts to put on the government agenda the need to open negotiations in order to redress the violation of the Foumban conference, and the socio-economic and political marginalization of the Anglophones as second class citizens. The gross marginalization and inequality in allocation of state resources, and the frustration of political exclusion culminated therefore in the AACI and AACII respectively. The refusal of the Cameroon government to yield to negotiations based on the Anglophone agenda resulted in the birth of the SCNC which took a resolute stand to demand for their independence from La Republique. The subsequent failures to force the regime in Yaounde to start the negotiations gave way to strong voices

asking for secession, not just redress of the Anglophone population situation and status. The 1999 declaration of the independence of Ambazonia made by SCNC is a proof of radicalization of a movement that, in the beginning, was in favour of a legal solution to the Anglophone problem within the frame of the Cameroon state.

The positive takeoff that was experienced in the early 1990s to renegotiate the Anglophone issue soon became more an illusion than a reality, as evident in the latent nature of the conflict, without a proportionate match in their achievements from that early stage until that date. Division among the Anglophone elites and ethnic cleavages, what has come to be baptized as the North-West/ South-West divide, accounts for this feet dragging in finding a realistic way forward for the Anglophone problem. Each of these varying camps among the Anglophone elites offers a conflicting explanation for the origin of and proposals for redressing the Anglophone predicaments in Cameroon today. It is as a result of these cleavages that Konings and Nyamnjoh argue that the post-colonial state has often taken advantage of these existing contradictions within the Anglophone community in Cameroon to set off the South-Westerners against their North-Western brothers, in an attempt to bolster the unitary agenda of the state and to block the Anglophones' aspirations. The Francophone-dominated post-colonial regime continuously attempted to obstruct the construction of a common Anglophone identity and position, by promoting and fanning the flames of the existing cleavages among the Anglophone Elites and stimulating new ethno-regional differences that appear to transcend the Anglophone–Francophone divide.

The core concerns of the Anglophone community

The Cameroon nation strives on a dicey patchwork of national unity and integration that has become almost a failed concept. Although traceable in the Ahidjo era and accelerated by the Biya regime, ethnic crisis became rife with the reintroduction of multi-party politics in 1990 (Fonchingong, 2005). The Anglophone problem has increasingly led many to revisit arguments for federalism or even secession from La Republique du Cameroun. The root of all these is to be found in the 1961 plebiscite, which brought together the two Cameroons with different cultures and colonial heritage. This union has unfortunately merely facilitated an assimilation of Southern Cameroonians who now feel much marginalized, exploited, and lack a real sense of belonging.

A review on the Anglophone socio-economic, political, and judiciary grievances will enable an understanding of the predicaments that characterize the political landscape of Cameroon, with an impending threat of an escalated violence if care is not taken. It is important to establish clearly that the Anglophone problem, unlike the ethnic crisis in Cameroon, is justified by the argument that these two separately administered regions were once autonomous prior to reunification in 1961, when a two state federation was established, with two prime ministers, a legislature and a single president, (Ngoh, 1999).

Furthermore, the 1972 referendum to adopt a new constitution, setting a unitary state to replace the federation, marked the turning point in the assimilation of the English speaking Cameroon by the dominant French speaking Cameroun. The inequalities resulting from the fusion of the English and French entities, the authoritarian regime and the repression, the opposing voices, especially from the English regions and movements, and the ability of the state to effectively manipulate the vulnerabilities of regional fracturing emanating there from, constitute the dynamics of the Anglophone issue, which should therefore be seen as more than an ethnicity crisis. The justification of the 1972 referendum was based on the reason that federalism impeded economic development and promoted regionalism. A growing number of articulate Anglophones were inclined to attribute these blames of regionalism and inefficiency rather to the hegemonic tendencies of the Francophone dominated state. All these grievances were commonly blamed in the loss of autonomy and the subordinate position of the English speaking citizens in the unitary state.

Political grievances

The main frustration of the Anglophones is generated by the fact that the Francophones dominate the state in the executive legislature and the judiciary with an increased monopolization of key positions by members of the president's ethnic group, who appear to be bolder in staking out claims on state resources. According to Koning and Nyamnjoh, as per 1991, 47 of the senior divisional officers in a total of 58 were of the Beti origin alone. This was the same case for the directors, as ¾ of them and general managers of para-state companies and further 22 out of the 38 high ranking bureaucrats who were appointed into the office of the prime minister were from the same region (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). This trend has continued ever since the union in 1961, till date unabated. Important ministries such as those in charge of territorial administration, armed forces, education, finance, trade, industrial development, and foreign affairs have never been headed by an Anglophone. The office of the prime minister, which is considered an Anglophone property (the constitution stipulates that, if the president of the country is Francophone, the prime minister should be Anglophone, and vice-versa; of course, with Biya in power indefinitely, the prime minister has always been selected from the Anglophones), remains very skeletal and is bereaved of any real constitutional power. Though referred to as head of government, the constitution does not provide him such powers to form a government, but rather to make suggestions to the president, who in fact has all the executive powers.

There is also deep frustration among the Anglophones generated by a sense of always being dominated by others and not having the opportunity of self-government. The Anglophones lament of the fact that at no point in the course of their history have they had any political interest that represented their best interest. Anglophones must admit that their entire political culture is one devoid of the concept of sovereignty-

based politics. That is true today in 2012 as it was in the 1950s, but unfortunately this problem has not been acknowledged as key to our very survival as a political identity. It used to be the Germans, next the British, and the French, and today they feel they are still subordinated by the Francophone government (Buea Declaration, 1993). An outstanding cause of the Anglophone problem today has been the evolution of the appellations of how the union was referred to in 1961 and how it is being referred to today. League of Nations mandate and then UN trust territory of Southern Cameroon was the appellation with which the English speaking Cameroon was identified, a status they gained in 1919 as mandated territory and UN trust territory in 1946 under the British administration. In 1961, the government of Southern Cameroon and the Republic of Cameroon, under the supervision of the United Nations, negotiated to form a union to be called "Federal United Cameroon Republic" which however ended up being called the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

In 1972, the union received a constitutional modification through a hijacked referendum, in clear violation of the federal constitution's article 47, which rendered null and void any action that threaten the integrity of the federated states (Southern Cameroon and La Republique du Cameroun). The appellation changed to United Republic of Cameroon.

The final blow to their right to self government came in 1984 with the restoration of law 84/01, (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997:213). The succeeding president Paul Biya engineered the Cameroon parliament to dissolve the 1961 federation and returned Cameroun to its original appellation before the union with the name "La Republique du Cameroun". This was the name of French Cameroun when they gained their independence in 1960 from France. This act stripped the Southern Cameroonians of their right to self-government, which the Anglophones fought vigorously through international bodies to uphold as they piloted the Southern Cameroonians into the 1961 federal institutions.

Such changes made it clear that Anglophones were denied that common sense of belonging which they used to enjoy in their autonomous state in the 1950s. There is distortion of historical evidences and facts to attest to the younger generations that two states formed a federal government in 1961 and that the union no longer exists simply because the La Republique returned to the original appellation it bore before the union.

The younger generation also questions the reasons for denying the option of full independence by the UN plebiscit of 1961. For reasons best known to the British, the administering authority at the time insisted that Southern Cameroon, whose population was more than that of Gabon, Congo, and Equatorial Guinea put together, should be made to gain "independence" either by joining Nigeria or Cameroun, (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). This act was totally unfair, retrogressive, and inconsistent with the spirit of article 76.b of the United Nations Charter. This aspect became even more annoying because the most popular option in Southern Cameroon (independence without reunification or integration), supported by Honorable P. M. Kale, was dropped by the UN on fraudulent

reports that the state of Southern Cameroon had not enough revenue and resources to sustain an independent state.

The growing feeling among the English Cameroonians is that they were and are continually maltreated. The United Nations resolution 1608 is central in the sovereignty dispute of Southern Cameroonians. Though they might have considered unity as strength or a guiding principle, Southern Cameroonians feel they must have been given the right and the opportunity to gain independence on their own, not by joining another state, especially if denied a seat at the United Nations. The cases of republics that were former USSR but had separate seats at the UN are clear examples to this case. Southern Cameroon thus argues that from the above it is clear that the trusteeship agreement was already under violation, since "joining" did not lead to either self-government or independence, as in 76.b of the UN charter, which calls for independence of all colonies before the end of 1960. Furthermore, there is a definition of the word "join" in the UN Charter, article 102, which obliges any member state of the UN wishing to join any other territory, to put the terms of joining into writing and file a copy with the UN secretariat for eventual publication to the rest of the world, as once was the case of Senegal and Gambia, which at one time were known as Senegambia. The resolution goes on further to say that if the member state fails to respect this clause, then any arrangement becomes invalid and cannot be sited before any organ of the UN (The Post interview with Molah Njoh Litume senior citizen and S.C.N.C coordinators 29/10/2011). In respect to the above provision, it is argued that La Republique got independence on the 1st of January 1960 and later joined as a member of UN on the 20th of September of that same year, while Southern Cameroon was still a trust territory. They became bound by the constitution of the UN the same date they gained membership, and if they were to join any territory, they had to conform to the statutory provisions of joining as prescribed by the United Nations article 102. This is an ever growing frustration after 42 years from the Union. Elites are pushed to call on the United Nations to restore and grant their independence from the bondage they are now into with the French Cameroon government.

Economic grievances

It is often said economic power is a condition sine-qua-non to possess political control or powers. The English region of Cameroon is often referred to as the economic bread basket of the country. This region is endowed with natural resources, and soils; climate on the coast encourages extensive commercial cultivation of tea, bananas, cocoa rubber and palms for palm oil. The English region hosts the biggest para-state corporation, the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), which is the second employer in the country after the government. This region boasts crops, timber and petroleum, which is intensively exploited especially by foreign companies for exportation (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The region is also a major producer and supplier of stable food

crops to other African countries like Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Gabon and the Central African Republic, whose markets rely mostly on their constant supply from the English region of Cameroon.

Given the rich natural endowments of the region, one will expect that such abundance will be accompanied by a meaningful development. Unfortunately, for the past 42 years that has not been the case. Most of the rural areas remain enclaves without farm-to-market roads, inaccessibility that has tremendously reduced rural productivity and has forced the rural dwellers into abject poverty. They cannot easily market their farm products and are at times forced to give them away at very disadvantageous prices – especially products that are highly perishable. The government deliberately keeps the indigenous rural population poor as a political strategy to induce political loyalty.

Timber exploitation which remains a rich export domain in Cameroon comes significantly from the English region of south west. Peasant farm lands are destroyed without any accompanied compensation for the destruction, which further makes lives very miserable for such individuals because even the accompanied taxes that would have been paid into the local councils to help rehabilitate the victims are being paid to rich city councils in the French speaking region. Timber exploited from the Ndian and Meme division in the English zone are usually found carrying stamps of Mbalmayoh rural council in the East province, making this region the immediate beneficiary of any benefits that should come from such western companies.

Whereas all Cameroon oil resources at present originate from the Anglophone region, all oil related public corporation – SNH, SONARA, SCDP, and HYDRAC – are predominantly found in the French section and are mostly staffed by the Francophone Cameroonians. Notwithstanding that all Cameroon oil exploitation, production and transformation takes place in Anglophone Cameroon, oil derived revenues are paid to the state directly in Yaoundé (Buea Declaration, 1993).

In the midst of economic crisis in the 1980s, Anglophones were inclined to attribute their misery to the corruption and mismanagement of the Biya regime. They argued that the English speaking Cameroonians had not benefited from the rich oil resources and criticized the absence of increased investment in ailing economy and neglected infrastructure in that part of the country, while oil revenues are used to promote development east of the Mungo in the French region (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). English based corporations like the CDC and PAMOL remain under constant threat of liquidation or sold to Francophone or French interest during the structural adjustment program.

It will be of no surprise that most of the English speaking region feels it is abandoned. Ndian division that play host to the Bakassi peninsula, which the international court of justice (ICJ) in 2002 ruled in favour of Cameroon against Nigeria, till today remain

very inaccessible, with a very deplorable state of roads. This region is not only rich in timber and fish, but is abundantly blessed with petroleum, specifically in the formally disputed Bakassi peninsular. The North-West region which has come to be known as the opposition strong hold has been almost abandoned to carter for itself as if to say it is not part of the Cameroon territory. All in all, Southern Cameroon, which provides almost 70% of the country revenues and sees almost no investment, feels left behind and outside the central government care and attention, and thus consistently fighting for autonomy and self-government.

Socio-cultural grievances

One of the greatest challenges of a modern nation-state is the protection of political rights, socio-cultural rights and economic interest of the minority groups within their boarders. Minority groups certainly become very angry if they consider themselves victims of the majority. Usually, in such cases, because of the unfavorable conditions, they develop a coping mechanism to disentangle the bondage, which usually does not exclude violence. The above scenario describes the situation of the English speaking minorities in Cameroon, who feel they are now re-colonized by their fellow neighbors.

A key issue of grief in the social domain has been the endless attempts to strip off the legacy of the Anglo-Saxon culture in the Southern Cameroon educational system. Anglophone students are discriminated against in the admission process into professional schools and other institutions of higher learning, notably the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM), where the Anglophone section has been eliminated. Anglophones have virtually been excluded from schools like *Ecole Nationale Superieure Polytechnique*, with only a dozen of Anglophones admitted there since its creation (Buea Declaration, 1993). This is partially the result of the gap between primary and secondary education of Anglophone students – which is given in English and on the basis of an Anglo-Saxon model, and the higher education, which is in French and based on the French model. This practice has forced many Anglophone students abroad, in pursuit of quality higher education, consistent with their basic formation. The cost of this is very high not only for the students themselves, but also for their families.

In line with with the agenda of assimilation, in 1983 the government promulgated an order modifying the Anglophone General Certificate of Education (GCE) and making it similar to the French *baccalaureat*. This led to student riots and boycott of classes in the Yaoundé University, brutally suppressed by police, stationed at the campus. Following pressure from some English formed groups, like the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM), Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC) and the Cameroon Anglophone Student Association (CANSA), in 1993 the government set up a General Certificate of Education board. This was an important achievement for Southern Cameroon after ten years of serious tensions and sporadic violence against the determined efforts to destroy the

GCE. (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The Biya regime was determined to destroy it, despite the Foumban accord of 1961, which stated clearly that the cultural legacies of the two states were to be maintained.

Ever since the reunification, English language has remained an official language just on paper. Despite the claimed bilingual nature of the country, official text and documents in Cameroon are issued mainly and often exclusively in French, (Buea Declaration, 1993). Professional exams to enter professional schools are often in French, a language that dominates the working language in offices in the country, irrespective of the region.

After the reunification, all the cinemas and theatres were obliged to show only French films in all the Anglophone main towns like Buea, Bamenda, Kumba and Limbe. Television films and program originally made in English were shown in Cameroon only after they were dubbed into French and only the French version would be available. Broadcast time in Cameroon radio television (CRTV) is very unevenly distributed between English and French programs: Anglophones, who participate equally in the financing of the corporation benefit from far less than ¼ of the services provided by the public utility.

Judicial grievances

The Foumban accord promised to uphold the Anglophone legal system, the common law. Unfortunately, this has not been the case, because often those in power have no knowledge of the common law and are thus forced to refer to the French legal system, which they are familiar with. The Francophone who have dominated the law-making process since 1972 have never bothered to take the necessary measures to ensure that the body of laws is in tune with the present day aspirations of Anglophone Cameroonians in the domains affected and governed by those laws.

The Anglophone community has been subject to widespread cultural assimilation policies, with education and judicial systems being very French-tainted. The majority of legal personnel in Cameroon are educated in the French universities, thus on civil law, and this prevents the Anglophones from a fair trial, based on their own common law system and in a language they understand best. Most often, the convicts from the English Cameroon are denied the right to interpretation and interrogated in French. Though the Constitution mentions the existence of two legal systems, the implementation of those policies is slow. Those who dare at times to work on strengthening the rights of Cameroonians, and Southern Cameroonians in particular, face severe repression, a view shared by the Unrepresented Nations and People Organization (UNPO).

Reports from UNPO indicate to the fact the SCNC is a banned movement in Cameroon and its meetings are often disrupted – a sign of lack of freedom within the Assembly in Cameroon. Political activists from this part of the country have been repeatedly attacked and imprisoned. Arbitrary arrest and political trials are very common in Cameroon, not

to mention the terrible conditions in Cameroon prisons, where deaths are not unusual. It took eight months in 2003 for Cameroon to acknowledge a death toll of 70 prisoners in the Doula central prison alone. As mentioned before, the right to free and fair trials is further amplified by the difficulties faced by the English speaking Cameroonians, who are not given the possibility to have a trial in their own language, and who are also denied access to legal counsel.

Up-to-date approaches to solve the Anglophone problem

The main approach to solving this issue, since the Anglophone problem began, has been the one based on dialogue. Unfortunately, the regime did not reciprocate. Mbide Kude, at the time vice national secretary of the SCNC accused the government of shying away from dialogue: *"we are opened to dialogue with the government, as the SCNC, not as individuals"*(Mbide Kude, 2005).

The visit of the UN Secretary Koffi Annan to Cameroon, in 2001, when he urged the government to dialogue, was an ample recognition and an attempt to engage dialogue, which failed. He said, during a press conference before leaving Cameron: *"I leave Cameroon with the impression that there is only one Cameroon, multilingual and multi-ethnic. I encourage a dialogue of these stake holders. In every country there are problems of marginalization. The way it has to be solved is by dialogue and not by walking away"*.

Former statesmen like Adamu Ndam Njoya and Haman Garga Adji, who had both served in ministerial positions, and are today presidential aspirants and leaders of political parties, both agreed that, if voted to power, they would renegotiate with Southern Cameroon if real unity is to be achieved (Mola Njoh Litumbe, the post, 2005).

A delegation of 14 citizens from Southern Cameroon presented a case file before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, in accordance with the provisions of article 54. After a thorough hearing of both parties, the Commission ruled that the state of Cameroon had violated articles 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7(1), 10, 11, 19, and 29 of the charter. However, contrary to the complainant, they had not violated the articles 12, 13, 17(1), 20, 21, 22, 23, (1) and 24 of the charter. Among many recommendations, the Banjul verdict recommended the Cameroon government to enter into dialogue with the complainants – in particular SCNC and SCAPO – to resolve the constitutional issues as well as grievances that could threaten national unity (The Banjul verdict 2009). This was yet another failed attempt to seat both parties on the table for dialogue, which has kept angers still high and threatened the peaceful co-existence of the parties.

Further steps to solve the Anglophone problem

After this critical look at the Anglophone problem in the previous paragraphs, and after reviewing the problem and the varying positions and approaches among the Anglophone elites, the need to fine-tune a common position among these groups becomes obvious.

The need for such conflict management mechanisms is even more relevant when we consider that the Anglophones at home and the diaspora have not collectively directed their resources to constructively de-escalate the present political crisis that has characterized the political landscape in Cameroon. Poor leadership, the absence of a clear vision and disorganized approaches, has characterized their activities. Having acknowledged the complexity and the divergence of views among the Anglophone elites, and the resistance from the *La Republique du Cameroun* to yield to negotiation, it is clear that a three-phases strategy is needed to peacefully solve the Anglophone problem.

The first phase would consist of an attempt to reconcile the different positions held by Anglophone elites with regards to the Anglophone problem. The aim here is to move the different factions or schools of thoughts away from their divergent and often incompatible positions, by identifying and establishing a common interest that cuts across their philosophies. In this way, one will be building a common Anglophone front with common Anglophone interests that reflect the will of the majority among the grassroots Anglophone community.

The second phase is an attempt to bring the two parties (the Anglophone and the Francophone) to a dialogue in order to revise the status of the union that has remained unchanged since 1961. While the first phase involves negotiations only between the Anglophone elites, this second phase will probably require the need for a neutral third party. The need for mediation in the second phase is justified by the fact that ever since the UN and the African Union Charter on Human Rights recommended negotiation, La Republique du Cameroun has constantly ignored the request. The wish of the Anglophones to have their French counterpart on the table for dialogue yielded no result. So, the need for a third party, who will not only mediate, but command some authority to coerce the regime for mediation, will be of prime importance for any meaningful outcome to be achieved.

The third phase focuses on strategies that could be applied for strengthening and fostering the spirit of one-nationhood in Cameroon. This requires the building of a common sense of belonging across cultural values and linguistic boundaries.

Phase One

The strategic aim of this phase is the reconciliation of positions and the establishment of a common strategy and purpose for the Anglophone movements. It has two main objectives: the first objective will be to reinitiate for the third time an all Anglophone conference (AACIII). This must not be done under the banner of any social movement or political party. This involves regrouping Anglophones across all works of lives. The clergy, traditional authorities and civil activist, leaders of political parties from the Anglophone section of Cameroon, social movement activist and student representatives, Anglophone members of the Bar association, female groups and the diaspora among

many others. These groups will be charged with the following tasks:

- Reviewing the Anglophone problem

- Reviewing the contributions of all the various actors and analyzing where their activities have led them this far.

- Negotiating a common position among the Anglophones, with great focus on the general and common interests of the Anglophones over selfish interests.

- Reviewing, in a more pragmatic and realistic terms, the options at the disposal of Anglophones, amongst which secession, two state federations, ten state federations and an effectively decentralized unitary state.

- Prioritizing the interest of the Anglophones from the most desirable to the least.

This critical review will help establishing where resources need to be redirected, and will provide answers as to why the movement existed for so long without any meaningful results, making the conflict latent. This exercise also needs to establish a common position and common interests among the major stakeholders.

The second objective will be to establish an option that should best translate the interest of Anglophones into reality. Such an option should go beyond the limited views of the major actors, duly taking into considerations opinions from the grassroots to give it a broad base representation. Several actions should be considered:

- Carrying out survey studies among a cross section of the Anglophones of varying categories, in order to indentify which option best accommodate their aspirations. It is important to mention here that the Anglophone problem, as it has come to be, was never a call for independence from the very unset. It appeared almost clear at the beginning that the third option, of independence, dropped by the UN, was a forgotten alternative during the early days of the Anglophone struggle. The main aim was entirely an appeal to rectify the economic, social and political exclusion that they were undergoing at the time. The failure of the Cameroon government to establish institutions that adequately accommodated their interest propelled the Anglophone elites to revisit the third option which was independence. With this in mind, one might feel that the desire to fix the Anglophone problem takes precedence over the method applied, as long as their interests are adequately guaranteed. As a further action, while secession could be an extremist position with very little feasibility, the other options could be negotiated;

- Design, propose and negotiate a federal structure that accommodates two state federations between the Anglophones and the Francophones;

- Such a draft proposal should adequately consider and protect what the Anglophones see as economic, political, social and cultural rights;

- Also, such a draft document for negotiation should equally reinstate the North-West/ South-West divide, which has some time required another school of thought that supported a ten state federation as a partial remedy for their differences.

The main difference between such a draft Constitutional proposal and the EMIA accord, which was presented by the tripartite conference in 1991, lies in the fact that, unlike the EMIA accord, which was a product of a few individuals, the new proposal ensures greater awareness. Such awareness generates a grass root support, should we take into account the fact that the views and the opinions of all social and political actors will be asked for and reflected in the draft document. This alone can ensure a greater impact. Such a collective effort, with greater force from the base, will act as a resource in itself, since it will not portray the conflict from the point of view of a few individuals mounting political pressure for selfish interest.

The third major objective will be the formation of a statutory body that represents and pursues the aspirations of the Anglophones. This implies that this entity should enjoy a broad base support from the grass roots Anglophones. To achieve this objective, the following steps are suggested:

- A major step will be building an executive body that evenly represents the different Anglophone groups and movements that already exist. This even representation within the leadership ranks of such an entity partially remedies the clash of interest over power among the different factions. However, emphasis and attention should be placed on gender and age balance. The leaders should have before them a clearly defined mission.

- In this regard, the mission of the leadership body should be clearly defined with focus on the following aspects:

- An agenda that clearly prioritizes the economic empowerment of Anglophones, with reliable measures promoted.

- Identifying and promoting the socio-cultural values of the Anglophones in a diverse and multi cultural Cameroon, ensuring that these values are adequately integrated and protected within the new structures.

- This team should be leading the negotiations between the two parties (Anglophones and Francophones).

The need for an AACIII and a review of the Anglophone problem as a starting point of this first phase is relevant in that the endeavor has gained more awareness among the grass roots than it had in the 1990s. These groups have come to develop their own perceptions about what they see as a way forward of the Anglophone problem, which may not necessarily be secession, as advocated by the social movements that have championed the development this far. The decision for a zero-sum option of

independence may only reflect the view of a cross section of the Anglophones, without adequately accommodating the point of views of the younger generations. That constitutes a generational gap between the 1990s generations ant the present ones. Any meaningful way forward therefore should consider the realities and the views of these groups and more, as they are indispensable to any meaningful change.

To sum up, the first phase is aimed at the following;

- Reconciling the Anglophone social and political actors

- Finding a common position among the elites and indentifying what the general interests of the Anglophones are.

- Reviewing the option that best accommodates their interest, in which a two state federation is recommended.

- Bringing together all stake holders and the Diaspora in drawing a draft Constitution that protects their political social and economic interest, while taking into consideration the differences between the two Anglophone provinces to avoid a potential clash in the future.

- The need to build a clear leadership and a clear vision, based on grass root support, that increases their negotiation strength with the French Cameroun,.

Phase two

This phase requires the services of a neutral third party, to bring the parties together at the negotiating table. Considering that the calls for negotiations have failed in the past, the choice of mediation is considered suitable. The mediator should be someone that can put pressure and/or offer incentives to both parties to move away from their most extreme positions and to find a common ground for an all-inclusive solution.

The main aim here should be to focus on negotiating to build an administrative system that should thoroughly accommodate the interests of the "two Cameroons".

Such a process should take into consideration the following aspects:

- Fairness in political participation of political actors of the two states, regarding key offices of the state. This should determine clearly how positions of responsibilities would be assigned.

- An electoral code that guarantees the legitimacy and the credibility of the elected officials to their electorates.

- Such negotiations should also focus on the manner of redistribution of state resources, taking into considerations credibility and accountability in the process. Due attention should be given on how developmental projects are determined and funded across the nation, duly prioritizing the needs of the masses.

- Concrete attempts should be done to rectify the judicial flaws that have characterized the latent conflict in Cameroon. This should first and foremost guarantee the independence of the two legal systems that are to be found in Cameroon, (the civil and the common law).

- Agreeing to a common vision in upholding and fostering the social values of Cameroonians of both Anglophone and Francophone origin. This should include their cultural heritages, the promotion of English and French across their geographic boarders, which should equitably be represented as official languages.

The third phase

This phase is based on the assumption that in order to achieve any meaningful, durable peace, the need to reconstruct a national identity across cultural boarders becomes absolutely necessary.

The main objective at this stage is redirecting human and financial resources from the diaspora in building a more vibrant and a self-reliant civil society at the grass roots. Such projects should target groups at the base that actively participate in the peace building processes. These could include the rural agrarian community, women empowerment groups, traditional authorities and civil activist groups and youth group movements, especially in universities. Strengthening the participation of local community media in professional ethics and reporting conflicts could be of great use.

Actions to be considered:

- Resources should be directed to empower existing citizen structures at the grass roots

- Provide a framework for people to work together and achieve goals that are beyond their individual capacities. This may include functional capacities like planning, management and service delivery.

- It could also include technical capacities relating to elections, conflict management, mediation and negotiations, all of which suppose taking into consideration traditional approaches, harmonizing them with modern tools in dealing with local issues.

- Such formation processes should aim at building a civil participation, which should be able to influence public policy processes and hold the government accountable.

- Promotion of local communication channels that effectively convey local demand for state accountability and transparency.

In a bid to enforce and empower local media as a veritable partner of change, they should be able to understand the difficulties of the people and constructively present the views of the people in a way that does not reignite division on ethnic or regional lines.

Other areas that could be revitalized in building such a durable peace to foster national integration should include the following:

- Identify existing governance structures at the grass roots, (traditional and religious base), evaluate the trust the communities bestow on such institutions and, where credibility is high, ensure program to strengthen these institutions.

- Community base organization providing services using local actors should be identified and trained in both new and local techniques, thus ensuring that programs are designed and implemented to strengthen their capacities.

In a broader context, implementing the following measures could further consolidate durable peace:

- Establish an independent, non-partisan entity, made up of identified respectable Cameroonians selected across both cultural backgrounds of English and French. Such a platform could focus on diverse issues in promoting National reconciliation. One example could be building monuments of fallen Cameroonian patriots across the two regions. The idea here is that such initiatives should be able to convey national sentiments, irrespective of whether the individuals were of French or English origin;

- A similar entity could be established at the regional level, which should play the role of an advisory council, using distinguished citizens within the region who are apolitical and non-partisan. These groups could strive to blend traditional and modern approaches to mediate regional issues and promote trust and confidence among groups, which may be developed from their shared cultural values;

- Build up similar units at district level, using community elders and elected council members. They should be able to promote community dialogue and to mobilize stakeholders to ensure local ownership of peace building processes and communal spirit.

Instead of conclusion

Given the leadership problem and the government's reluctance to enter into any sort of negotiation, a generational conflict has developed, where the old still stand by their motto "*the force of argument and not the argument of force*", while the SCYL, who after monitoring the struggle, now believes that real secession can never be attained on dialogue. To this effect they are no longer willing to adhere to negotiation. Some now view arms as the only alternative and available means to accomplish their goals. Meanwhile the activities and politics in the Anglophone Cameroon have been characterized by intrigues, fear, suspicion, and government maneuvers. The regime has shrewdly tried to shift public attention from the rising Anglophone grievances and has maliciously used *divide-et-impera* tactics to block the building of a common Anglophone political movement with a common purpose and a common strategy to attain it.

The problem with these tactics, as we often see in other cases, is the danger that some of the factions will become fed-up with the vain attempt to get what they want through peaceful means. That exposes the immediate threat of violent escalation and radicalization of goals, veering from federalization towards full independence. The road to civil war will then be open.

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NATO's Exit Strategy in Afghanistan

Adrian POP

Abstract

NATO is preparing to withdraw its military forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, leaving behind a tormented country. The article is analyzing the exit strategy put in place by NATO's decision makers, starting with a brief overview of the Afghan conflict, focusing on its roots and key actors. Then we are reviewing some lessons learned from previous military interventions and we are proposing a theoretical framework for conflict termination, comparing it with NATO's doctrine and the alliance's actual enterprises in the Afghan theater of operations. We are considering the main aspects of moving the responsibility for security, governance and development from NATO and the international donors to the Afghan government and military forces, including the regional tensions and the debate about including the Taleban into the process.

Key words: *Afghanistan, NATO, exit strategy, Hamid Karzai, Afghan Security Forces, Taliban, ISAF, Provincial Reconstruction Team.*

Introduction

During the negotiations for the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan in the mid-1980s, a Western diplomat confessed to UN mediator Diego Cordovez that "the Russians would like to get out of Afghanistan, but they do not know how. And we in the West would like to cooperate and help them, but we don't know how either." (Edelstein, 2009). Almost 15 years later, a NATO leading military force faces the same predicament.

As history reveals, it has always been easier to launch a military intervention than to end it, especially when the initial plan has not gone well. Starting with the United States in Vietnam, the Soviet Union in Afghanistan

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and Israel in Lebanon, intervening powers have often found difficult to extricate themselves from dangerous situations.

The US and its allies are now beating a retreat from Afghanistan. Even if there are some vaguely defined plans for a continuing US-led counterterrorism strategy in the region, the transfer of full responsibility for security, governance and development to the Afghan government, its forces and people, is underway. The strategy is to continue fighting the Taliban through 2014, and then turn the war over to the Afghan military and police forces, guided by U.S. advisors and trainers (Lind, 2012). But after one year of a transition process that started in 2011, and officially is supposed to be completed by the end of 2014, concerns are expressed in the international arena over the daunting challenges facing the transition and whether it will succeed in delivering a self-sustaining Afghan state (Stapleton, 2012).

Conflict background

Afghanistan is an ancient land. Its early history, like the early history of Central Asia and the history of the republics from the Eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, is roughly the same as the history of ancient Iran. The same is true of the history of the Achaemenians, Alexander the Great, and the pre-Islamic history of Iran. It is with the advent of the Arabs, and, later on, of the Turks, that Afghan history took another course from the neighboring states. The current Afghan nation is made up of many different nationalities – the result of several migrations and invasions. Within its current borders, established during the first unification of the country, in 1747, under the Durrani Dynasty, there are at least a dozen major ethnic groups – Pashtun, Tajik, Baluch, Aimak, Turkmen, Hazara, Uzbek, Nuristani Chahar, Arab, Kirghiz, Pashai and Persian (Ritscher, 2012).

The Pashtun nationality has been the most dominant during the entire Afghan history. They populated what now are southern Mghanistan and the Tribal Agencies and the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. The term Afghan, for example, is viewed by other peoples in the country to refer to the Pashtuns, who represent about 50% of the total population. Even the major royal families of the country were Pashtun. Tajiks come in second with 25%, and the others make up considerably smaller percentages (Ritscher, 2012). The Pashtun tried, unsuccessfully, in the 1950s to establish a Pashtunistan, a separate state.

Islam was imposed to Afghanistan during the eighth and ninth century by the Arab conquerors. Prior to that, the nation had been ruled by various Persian, Greek, Sassasian, and other Central Asian empires. Following a break down in Arab rule, some semi-independent states began to emerge. These local dynasties and small states were eventually overwhelmed and crushed during the Mongolian invasions of the 1200s – conquerors who were to stay in control of part or all of the Afghan territory until the 1500s, despite some violent forms of resistance and civil strife. Nowadays the official

religion of Afghanistan is Islam. The majority (84%) of Afghans, represented by the Pashtun majority as well as most of the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmens are Sunni of the Hanafite School. The rest of the population is Shiite (Roberts, 2003).

After the collapse of the Mongol Empire, Afghanistan found itself in a situation much like what has continued into modern times – caught into the strategic game of two great powers. After the Mongols left the Afghans continued with the struggle against the might of the British Empire. The first Afghan War lasted three years, from 1839 to 1842. In the course of the war, the British India temporarily dispossessed Afghanistan of parts of its territory, and tried to install a puppet Afghan ruler. However, this plan didn't succeed, and the British lost almost all their troops before they manage to extract themselves from Afghanistan.

The Second Afghan War started in 1878, when Afghanistan found itself right in the middle of the historical rivalry between the Russian Empire to the north and the British Empire to the southeast. Like two chess players caught in a "Great Game", the Russian and British officials moved their troops closer and closer to each other, subjugating the small kingdoms and tribal populations around Afghanistan. The rules included political intrigue and diplomacy, from the part of the Russians, while the British relied primarily on military tactics. As both strategies provided little success, the two players agreed to make Afghanistan a buffer zone between their empires. The British took control over Afghanistan's foreign relations, but they were forced, as in the previous Afghan War, to withdraw their troops from the Afghan state in 1880 (Roberts, 2003).

Using the post- World War I conditions to their advantage, the Afghans attacked the remaining British posts to the east of the country and managed to free the areas controlled by British forces. Taking a strategic decision, Britain considered useless to get involved into a Third Afghan War. Thus, in August 19, 1919 Afghanistan achieved its complete independence from the British Empire.

After getting the independence, Afghanistan went through numerous local disputes for power till 1978, when a soviet ideology came to replace the religious laws with the Marxist ones, empowering a sum of socialist-liberal measures intended to address the *pasthunwali.* Corroborated with the soviet invasion, this got Afghanistan to a new cycle of conflict. The USSR deployed 100,000 Red Army troops into Afghanistan in 1979. The US saw this as a great opportunity to undermine the Soviet Union as part of its Cold War strategy, and they began to provide training and weapons to the Mujahedeen (prophet's soldiers) resistance groups, along with extra support from other countries such as Saudi Arabia (who had their own agenda) and the UK (www.insightonconflict.org, 2012). The soviet-afghan war (1979 – 1989) brought to light the rise of the Mujahedeen, militants that were fighting for the liberation of Afghanistan and which were led – ironically – by Osama bin Laden, the controversial character whose presence would have a significant impact upon the conflict situation on Afghanistan.

In the early 1990s, a militia group called the Taliban began to emerge as a political and religious force. They had the support of many Afghan refugees from Pakistan. The Taliban pretended to fight the tyrannical rule of the local governor and began to establish greater order into the area. The group gained increasing recognition, power, and support, and began to take control of much of southern and central Afghanistan.

After the soviet withdrawal and the communist fall, the struggle for power continued; there was a large Pakistani political influence that increased internal disputes. This was the moment when the name of Ahmad Shah Massoud got resonance, the man who had a significant contribution in the creation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, as a result of the Peshawar Accord, a power sharing agreement between the political parties. Only the Pakistani supported Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his political party and paramilitary group, Hezb-e Islami did not accept the just-formed interim government.

Therefore, Afghanistan started to have an open civilian conflict inside its boundaries with significant external influences. And from this point, was just a matter of time 'till the internal disputes would deteriorate and a new faction emerged. Rising under the guidance of Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Taliban began their activities as militia and immediately took the control over the country, installing a new regime, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, bringing numerous restrictions and constrains when applying their radical approach of the Islamic religion. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban regime ruled Afghanistan in a cruel way and with a high level of human rights trespassing, especially against women. All this time, Taliban received military and financial support from external sources and put the bases of a successful cooperation with Al-Qaeda (Nacu, 2012).

After the assassination of Massoud, on September 9, 2001, and the attacks from September 11, 2001, the armed forces of the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and the Afghan United Front (Northern Alliance) launched Operation Enduring Freedom, on October 7, 2001. From that time till now, Afghanistan was the scene of operations conducted against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Since 2001, Taliban insurgency brought a coalition force to the scene of Afghan war, consisting in more than 50 countries, which struggles to counter fight any terrorist movement in the area hand in hand with Afghan military and police troops.

The Exit Strategy

The debate over the necessity of an exit strategy to be used after a military intervention originated in America's traumatic experience with the Vietnam War. Since the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union had the monopoly on large-scale interventions; there were also interventions by Cuba (in Angola and Ethiopia), Egypt (in Yemen), and even India (in Sri Lanka). Only a minority of these interventions ended up well, like the US defense of South Korea ('50-'53), the Soviet Union's 1956 invasion

of Hungary, and the American overthrow of the corrupt Panamanian President Manuel Noriega's in 1989. David Edelstein observes that a survey of more than twenty major military interventions since the end of World War II reveals that intervening powers were able to craft effective exit strategies in only about a third of the cases – and those happened to be the cases in which the goals of the interventions had already been met (Edelstein, 2009). The debate intensified after the end of the Cold War, as the United States used the interventions more out of will than of necessity. In laying down what later came to be called the Powell Doctrine, it was Colin Powell, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and then US secretary of state, who was the first to include an exit strategy on his list of prerequisites that should be met before the United States committed military forces overseas (Edelstein, 2009).

Theoretical approach

Five lessons in exit strategies

Both the failures and the successes of military interventions produce, according to David Edelstein, a handful of easy lessons on how an exit strategy should be designed.

The first lesson is "*how you leave does not matter very much*". The former U.S. national security advisers Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft published in 2008 a much-noted book in which they argued that it matters a great deal how and intervention is ended, and it has a surface logic. A quick departure could drive to civil war or create a power vacuum that adversaries could exploit. Leaving according to a preexisting plan could allow the intervening power to withdraw with its stability intact and even its reputation unscathed. On the other hand, Edelstein disagrees with that theory and argues that evidence suggests that these choices do not matter much. „Whether or not an exit leads to instability or the erosion of the intervening power's reputation depends much more on the conditions under which the intervention ended than on the character of the pullout. There is no such thing as a failed intervention capped by a successful exit strategy. This is not to say that exit strategies are completely inconsequential-some clearly are executed better than others. But exit strategies are far less important than the overall success of the interventions that precede them" (Edelstein, 2009).

The second lesson is about the strategy to save face, because it is *hard to make a defeat look like a victory*. The attempts to save face usually take the form of some long negotiated agreements, before the actual withdrawal that allow all sides to claim that they have accomplished something useful during the conflict. Face saving agreements include plans for post-withdrawal governance and security institutions, as well as financial assistance and other kinds of support for the local government. But these agreements are rarely credible, rarely long lasting, and are almost always known to be flawed even by the parties involved. This was the case of the 1988 Geneva Accords, which ended the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, which proved to be ineffective, as the country slipped into a civil war and then, in 1996, into the hands of the Taliban.

Even if the strategy is proved to be defective, it is known to be a common practice because the agreements offer short-term domestic rewards to political leaders of all the conflicting sides. First, extricating forces in a way that appears honorable may give enough cover to allow a leader to stay in power or get reelected. Second, an agreement that holds together long enough can allow disclaim for any responsibility in case of extreme outcomes that recur after the troops have left.

The third lesson says *when in doubt, leave*. The best available option may often be to leave sooner rather than later, especially when a reasonable strategy for victory cannot be seen in the near future. But that is not to say it will always produce an acceptable outcome. There are some domestic political costs in leaving sooner, without a clear ending of the conflict; on the other hand, staying longer without the promise of a victory can also increase the human and material costs.

The intervening power, usually, uses two strategies in order to reduce the chances of a catastrophic outcome. It can press other powers to abstain from covering the missing spot in the power vacuum created by its departure, and it can appeal to the United Nations and/or other international institutions to step in to preserve the peace and protect vulnerable minorities. But history shows that such institutions are not particularly eager to clean up the mess especially if their previous attempts in dealing with this kind of situations proved to be encouraging.

The fourth lesson emphasizes the role of *domestic policies* in an exit strategy. Two kinds of domestic political pressure usually appear, pushing in opposite directions. First, it is the pressure that comes in the form of demands to reduce the human suffering and cut the costs caused by an intervention, reflected in poll numbers and protest marches. Second, it is the imperative to avoid being the cause of a failure.

The fifth and final lesson is about how an exit strategy shouldn't preclude any intervention. Even if a strong and convincing plan for getting out should preclude a military intervention, there are cases in which it is impossible to determine the terms of exit in advance. This is the case of most humanitarian driven interventions, where the "how to get out" must be shaped following the shifting conditions on the ground by being able to adapt the necessary strategies quickly.

NATO's doctrine of conflict termination

History has shown that it is always easier to get into a conflict then to get out of it. The lessons learnt during the last century of military outbursts conducted to the necessity of thorough planning ahead before any intervention. The first step is largely theoretical, even ideological and it consists of designing a doctrine.

A distinction between conflict termination and conflict resolution should be made. Conflict termination is defined as the formal end of fighting and not as the real end of

the conflict. Conflict resolution is essentially a civil problem that may require a long time and usually is supported by military actions. By a successful conflict termination, the military can set the framework for a favorable conflict resolution (Flavin, 2003).

US military doctrine claims that the purpose of military operations is to set the proper conditions that will compel the adversaries to end hostilities on terms favorable to the United States and its allies. US joint doctrine and NATO doctrine state: "If the conditions have been properly set and met for ending the conflict, the necessary leverage should exist to prevent the adversary from renewing hostilities.... When friendly forces can freely impose their will on the adversary, the opponent may have to accept defeat, terminate active hostilities, or revert to other types of conflict such as geopolitical actions or guerrilla warfare."(Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2001, p. III-24) The definition focuses on conflict termination and not on conflict resolution. This joint military doctrine thus recognizes that although coercive military operations may end, the conflict may continue by other means such as insurgency, terrorism, economic disruptions, political actions, cyber war, or acts of civil disobedience. This is definitely the case of Afghanistan, where the military are currently engaged in stability operations while are in the same time conducting conventional war activities.

Designing an Exit Strategy

In order to succeed, a conflict termination plan should include the following fundamentals: conducting early interagency planning; establishing adjustable objectives, and end states; providing for intelligence and signaling; ensuring unity of effort; harmonizing the military operations with the civil effort, and establishing the proper post-conflict organization (Ikle, 1971).

Planning for conflict termination and post-conflict operations must begin early in the intervention phase. The difficulty would be in harmonizing all the different objectives of all the agencies and nations involved into one single integrated effort.

As the military obey a political decision maker, the objectives established initially may always change and are defined in broad terms. The most difficult task is to take this general political guidance and provide concrete military objectives for the day after the shooting stops. NATO predicted this problem and changed its approach when the Stabilization Force (SFOR) assumed the responsibility from IFOR, using an "*end state*" rather than an "end date." The Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations recognizes that the end state may be a "moving target, one that needs continuous refinement throughout an operation." (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997, p. 25). Thus, the end state for the first IFOR troops that moved into Bosnia in 1995 was different from that of the SFOR that remained there in 2003. Because the post-conflict period may last for years, an end state that is general rather than specific may facilitate military operations (Rast, 1999).

With regard to the initial operation in Afghanistan, Enduring Freedom, because there was no interagency plan before the operation started, there was no clear objective about a post-conflict scenario. What does "promote regional stability" mean? Does it mean nation-building, which the Bush Administration had stated? Is this a job for the US military or for some other agency? How did the short-term objectives, such as empowering the various war lords with financial means and weapons, promote regional stability? After 11 years, the answers to these questions are still being debated (Stout and Flavin, 2002). A plan was requested in April 2002, and eventually provided several years later, but what was produced not only didn't match the earlier predictions for an exit strategy but also was too late to shape the conflict termination and post-conflict operation. Most of the elements of a good conflict termination plan like the end states, interim objectives, and measures of effectiveness were neither disseminated nor used. There was no interagency division of labor, no unity effort and no balance between short-term needs and long-term objectives that would lead to a successful conflict resolution strategy (Stout and Flavin, 2002).The *intelligence operation* needs to determine the conditions that must exist for the conflict to terminate and the post-conflict actions to succeed. As Professor Christopher Mitchell has observed, "it is important to direct some attention to the parties' internal decision making process which depends on the intermittently presented choice of (1) perpetuation, or (2) termination of the conflict: and to the changing evaluations of the costs and benefits of these options, as perceived by the leaders of the parties in conflict" (Mitchell, 1991, p. 35). Predictive intelligence is a must to ensure that the proper moment for conflict termination is not neglected. The intelligence must assess the influence that all sides possess and the true intentions of the opponents. The information operation can also provide the appropriate *signaling* to the adversaries to show them the opportunity to terminate the conflict at an earlier state. Then it is up to the political decision makers to seize the opportunity and deliver the peace.

Another decisive step in designing a functional conflict termination plan is harmonizing civil and military operations. Harmonization is necessary and must occur across the interrelated levels of various institutions and agencies involved in strategic, operational, and tactical planning. All military operations have civil impacts, and most civil programs will affect the military. This integrated planning is only one of four considerations that can improve civil-military operations. The other three are committed political leadership, strong coordination mechanisms, and the use of lead agencies (Flavin, 2003).

Both the military and the civilians should establish joint mechanisms for coordinating the collective effort. Examples include the use of extensive liaisons, establishing Civil Military Operations Centers (CMOC), Joint Commissions and civilian affairs assets. As an illustration, during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Central Command, a military structure, established a Humanitarian Assistance Working Group in order to

integrate the efforts of the coalition partners with the UN and NGOs acting locally. Also, a liaison cell composed of representatives from the UN Office of Humanitarian Assistance, the UN Joint Logistics Center and Inter Action NGO coordinated their actions with the J5 (Plans and Policy Directorate) and the Deputy Commander of Central Command. In the operational area, a Combined Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force with subordinate CMOCs was also formed (Flavin, 2003).

Usually, the coherence and accountability are best achieved by using a lead organization as point of contact for other structures. A lead agency is one that has been mandated by the international community, normally one of the main UN agencies, to coordinate the activities of the civilian organizations that volunteer to participate in a mission (Flavin, 2003). In Afghanistan this part is played by UN Joint Logistical Center, whose primary function is to avoid duplication of resources and effort and to provide a reliable interface with the military.

But still, one of the key questions that is waiting for an answer, even after several decades of military interventions, is who should make the planning and preparation for conflict terminations and especially for the post conflict phase? Can the same joint and multinational agency that is conducting the combat operation successfully prepare the termination and implement the transitions to a post-conflict peaceful situation? History and experience indicate difficulties in doing so.

The Exit Strategy in Afghanistan

First Steps

In December 2001 the first international conference on Afghanistan's post-Taliban future was held in Bonn. The conference was attended by all the parties involved in the Afghan conflict except the Taliban. The main focus was to create a strategy for a political transition, based on the state's structures found by the 1964 constitution. The plan did not also include the monarchy and the position of prime minister. The Bonn roadmap included reconstruction of the country's shattered infrastructure, economic growth sustained by the private sector, reforming the public administration sector, and a security sector reform (SSR). The SSR aimed to bring the means of violence under central state authority, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups; the creation of a new Afghan army; reforms of the police force and the judiciary, and countering the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics (Stapleton, 2012). The Bonn agreement was intended to lead to an *end state*: a stable and democratic Afghan state, which would allow the removal of the coalition's armed forces.

Since 2001, the situation in Afghanistan has grown from a relatively simple post-intervention setting into a more complex environment marked by terrorism, insurgency, economic, and political instability. All parties have approached the emerging issues in uncoordinated ways, with fragmented operations and reactions to events rather than

strategic actions designed to support long-term objectives. The absence of a shared vision for Afghanistan has increased the difference between means and ends. For instance, US troops narrowly focused on fighting terrorists in Afghanistan after the Taliban were removed from power, even though several terrorists had already snuck across into Pakistan territory. Other NATO allies restricted their contributions to locally controlled peacekeeping operations despite the fact that peace had not yet been achieved. Admiral Michael Mullen, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, when addressing the US Congress in 2007 about the challenges facing the international community in Afghanistan said "in Iraq, we do what we must ... In Afghanistan, we do what we can" (Gilmore, 2012).

Early concerns that security aspects of NATO's mission were unfit were confirmed by the 2002 UN Security Council's decision not to extend the International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) presence beyond Kabul. This left a security breach that was exploited by organized criminal syndicates, financed from the illicit trade in opium, gems, timber, and weapons. It was also exploited by Taliban militant groups that reestablished themselves near the Pakistan border. Their mission was facilitated by the abusive and predatory behavior of some local representatives of the official Afghan government (British Parliamentary Defense Committee, 2011).

The different national views within NATO member states, exemplified by conflicting Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) approaches, limited the use of military resources committed to Afghanistan by the ISAF Headquarter. This, combined with the deflection of US attention from Afghanistan to Iraq from mid-2002, contributed to the increasingly incoherent nature of the international involvement in Afghanistan (Stapleton, 2007). Meanwhile, the Afghan government's slow progress in reinforcing its capacity for proper governance and public service delivery, the risk of criminalized patronage networks within and outside Afghanistan (Maass, 2011), the social unrest after the repressive rule of the Taliban, constituted internal factors that deteriorated the domestic security and fed the insurgency.

Starting with 2005, NATO's strategy in Afghanistan focused primarily on improving the coordination between its various levels and agencies. The integrated approach required combining military, diplomacy, and development resources with counterinsurgency doctrine (Alderson, 2009) Afghanistan's difficult situation required that NATO's forces simultaneously faced the challenges of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and nation-building. But, all countries present in Afghanistan followed their own perspective in how their participation should be, which has prohibited the establishment of a unique action plan and often found well-intentioned coalition members at cross purposes. This was also the case of international cooperation in implementing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and related policy directives. The ANDS, approved at the Paris Conference in June 2008, envisions Afghanistan as "a stable

Islamic constitutional democracy at peace with itself and its neighbors" by 2020 (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2008). An earlier White House paper defined United States' objectives in Afghanistan in terms of helping "the people of Afghanistan defeat the terrorists, and establishing a stable, moderate, and democratic state that respects the rights of its citizens, governs its territory effectively and is a reliable ally in the War on Terror" (America.gov, 2007) Afghan and international operations have not sufficiently served these visions. "Many actors have refused to sufficiently invest in the security, political, and economic institutions that are necessary to underpin the objective of a stable democracy toward which they claim to be working. In a state that was decimated by decades of war, merely holding elections will not ensure stability" (Jalali, 2009).

Afghanistan is currently at a tipping point where its government's legitimacy is being openly challenged by a group of antigovernment forces, including the Taliban. For several years the Taliban have operated a shadow government in Afghanistan's most dangerous and remote areas, and its power now reaches Kabul's doorstep. Even if most Afghans do not consider the insurgents able to replace the current government, they are also reluctant to stand up to them on behalf of a government that can neither protect its citizens nor provide basic services. The international coalition and the Afghan government must develop a strategic approach in order to encourage the Afghan society in choosing the right course. The Bonn process had already initiated a bottom-up system by allowing regional leaders and warlords to help overthrow the Taliban. The decentralization process is balanced by the 2004 Afghanistan constitution, a document that empowered the central government to proceed from the top down.

Challenges of the Transition

The departure of the bulk of International Security Assistance Force combat troops under NATO command from Afghanistan is officially scheduled for completion by the end of 2014. This will end the phased security transition process that formally began in March 2011 and will move the responsibility for governance, development, and security to the Afghan government and its security forces.

Although the transition timeline was formally agreed by NATO and the Afghan government in November 2010 at the Lisbon summit, the political decision to end the IASF mission in Afghanistan had apparently been taken within NATO members two years earlier (Stapleton, 2012). But the agenda for US troops' withdrawal is still in debate at Washington (Associated Press, 2012). The Australian government has already announced their intention to withdraw their forces by 2013. The possible acceleration of the security transition will also affect decisions by regional states capable of influencing and projecting power into Afghanistan. These would include mainly Pakistan but also India, Iran, Russia, and China. Handing over of the entire management of the insurgency to an instable Afghan government ahead of schedule can threaten all the hard work

done until now in maintaining a relatively stable environment. On the other hand, even if the military withdrawal will be completed only at the end of 2014 as officially planned, the international military forces will already have been significantly reduced by the summer of that year. There are some voices speculating that the schedule will be adjusted in order to allow the maintaining in place of sufficient troop numbers and other resources for Afghanistan's upcoming Presidential elections (Stapleton, 2012).

The most important goal of the transition is a self-sustaining Afghan state. International military forces are gradually pulling back as Afghan forces will assume responsibility for security in clearly designated transition areas and take the lead at the tactical level. The coalition will continue to provide direct support and mentoring before moving into a support and monitoring role. This will transform NATO's mission from combat to training. The security handover involves the closure of all Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). However, the negotiations over a 'Bilateral Security Agreement' will probably result in the US retaining a number of regional bases in Afghanistan after the transition (Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2012).

The Afghan government has asked for guarantees over a long term relationship with the international community. The government of Afghanistan has sought to establish binding agreements with the US and its NATO allies with respect to post-2014 security, in an effort to ensure a military presence that can provide protection in view of perceived regional threats. The major confusion regarding the issue of security assurances is whether international guarantors will be providing military and strong financial support to one side in a potential and possibly widening civil war, given the limited legitimacy of the current Afghan government. A ten year Strategic Partnership Agreement was put in place on 1 May 2012, between the US and the Afghan government but does not provide the king of guarantees the Afghans are looking for. General Allen indicated continuing difficulties over this since November 2011, stating "it has not yet been determined what the US role would be if Afghanistan suffered a conventional attack from one of its neighbors" (Radin, 2011). The Afghans are not truly willing to do everything for the US protection. Even if President Karzai called a "Traditional *Loya Jirga*" in order to promote a national consensus about the agreement, when the Americans asked for full legal immunity for their stationary troops, the Afghan government stepped back. It should be recalled that a similar decision by the Government of Iraq was a determining factor in President Obama's decision to withdraw all US forces from Iraq by the end of 2011 (Schmidt, 2011).

The NATO member states that lead on the transition process (US, UK, Germany, and France) consider the transition strategy to be both realistic and reliable. They argue that by 2015, the Afghan government and security forces will be in a position to take responsibility for security, governance, and development at levels that are "good enough" to

ensure reasonably promising prospects for achieving the transition's objective (America. gov, 2007). However, the success of the transition process depends on the actual conditions on the ground in Afghanistan and the freedom of the decision makers to adjust the strategy to continuous shifting circumstances.

Security Transition

The transition process revolves around putting in place the appropriate security conditions that will allow the withdrawal of the bulk of NATO's forces and a transition of responsibility for governance, security and development to the Afghan government. This approach was agreed upon at the London and Kabul conferences, and the Lisbon NATO Summit formally began in July 2011 with completion countrywide planned by the end of 2014 (Ruttig, 2011). One of the essential conditions was that the transition be an irreversible process.

The security transition has to be viewed in the context of a wider strategy supporting the possibility of the military exit. This wider strategy includes gearing up of diplomatic efforts to establish a long lasting regional security and economic framework. A first sign was the 'Declaration on an Enduring Partnership', signed by the NATO member-states and the Afghan government at the summit in Lisbon in November 2010. This step represented a political gesture of reassurance from the Alliance that it will continue to play a significant political role in the region, in much limited ways, but for a longer term.

Guaranteeing a secure foundation for future social and economic development should be the first step for the Afghan authorities. The kind of security they are seeking can be provided, for the time being, only by the military. The question is how the Afghan government can afford to maintain a sufficient military force. Also, skilled Afghan security forces will be needed in the long-term, so that standing up such forces should be part of any long-term strategy. Even if the Taliban lack the capacity to win militarily, they have the ability to challenge international forces while at the same time disrupting the Afghan government. They are using a strategy based on a traditional feature of Afghan history colloquially called „long-termism." Quite simply, it is an ability to outlast the patience of the enemy (Jalali, 2009). So, a more substantial and effective Afghan security force than those that currently exist should be put in place in order to give the Afghan government the ability to fight the insurgents efficiently. Currently, the Afghan National Army (ANA) is designed to expand to include 134,000 soldiers, and there are calls to extend it even further to 200,000 soldiers or more.

NATO promised support for training and mentoring the ANSF post-2014 and to provide Afghanistan with access to NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP) toolbox; this includes air traffic management, civil emergency planning, and access to training in PFP centers. But, for now only half of the international trainers currently required have been provided for the ANA.

There also is a need to double the size of the Afghan National Police (ANP). Such goals are commendable but will take a significant amount of time and resources. Establishing the rule of law that can serve the Afghans is as indispensable as establishing the roots of individual security and will involve the overhauling of a failed Afghan government. The United States and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan never gave serious attention to making the government work and have repeatedly ignored its inefficiencies and corruption. It is now clear that the government's deficiencies and its overreliance on foreign support have alienated the Afghan society and undermined Afghanistan's fragile stability. Plans to reform the civilian administration will be difficult to achieve, as government officials are inadequately trained, poorly paid, and unaccountable to the people they govern. Those in Kabul who are invested in such a dysfunctional system will oppose any policies that will allow provinces and local communities to take the lead in the country's governing (Jalali, 2009). Another key requirement for winning over the people is fighting corruption and the illicit drug trade. The weak Afghan government, together with the associated endemic violence and poverty, contributes to the growth of the country's illicit drug production. Therefore, a solution that brings together the development of security, governance, the rule of law, and the economy-the same elements that comprise a comprehensive strategy for defeating the insurgency-needs to be sought. Massive eradication of opium poppies alone will neither help in reducing the illicit drug industry nor in defeating the insurgency.

Another concern when it comes to a successful transition is the reevaluation of the role of the National Directorate of Security. The directorate is perceived to be the descendant of „KHAD," the Afghan franchise of the Soviet KGB. The NDS remains dominated by the Parcham faction that still identifies it by name and associate it with educated Dari-speaking Kabul. The directorate has significant leadership links with the Afghan government Pashtun leaders, but remains distrusted by the non-Dari speaking Pashtun population spread across the southern part of the country. The integration of such a structure with communist roots by Western forces in the security policy remains a challenge as its equivalent simply doesn't exist in Western society. Yet they continue to exert real, and at times disruptive, power.

The failure of the Security Sector Reform (SSR) process created under the 2001 Bonn agreement is noticeable in continuing problems over police reform, the difficulties in achieving a representative ethnic balance in the army, the failure to disband illegal armed groups and a flourishing narcotics trade. The Afghan Local Police (ALP) program and the focus by the international community on the development of a paramilitary police force form examples of this short-term approach (Mukhtar, 2011). Also, the SSR processes failed to challenge the political culture of warlord-ism that had developed during the series of Afghan wars that followed the 1978 Saur Revolution (Nojumi, 2002). This culture had caused political fragmentation and power distribution from bottom to top, without the balancing from a centralized government and had produced a volatile

security landscape. This situation had paved the way for the rise of the Taliban. The overthrow of the Taliban regime at the end of 2001, with the help of the international coalition, returned power to former warlords and local leaders, many of whom were known to have Afghan blood on their hands from previous periods of conflict. Their co-option into the governance and security structures shaped by the Bonn agreement and confirmed by the 2005 parliamentary elections, widely viewed as political convenience on the part of the NATO members and the Afghan interim authority, undermined the domestic legitimacy of the new Afghan government. It discouraged both civil society actors and a large portion of population, many of whom had hoped for the creation of long-term political stability and rule of law.

As a process of decentralization, any future plan of governance in Afghanistan should enable Afghan tribes to be proactive in procuring their own security. Local communities and tribes in Afghanistan have long complemented the central government's efforts to maintain security, either by taking an active role in policing during periods of peace and by taking a military function in repelling foreign invasions and repressing domestic uprisings during times of conflict (Stapleton, 2012). The Afghan tribes are functioning under a traditional system called *arbakai*, which essentially is a concept of aiding the tribes in providing a group of armed men to serve as a temporary militia force, capable of enforcing decisions made by the *Jirga*, tribal councils. Afghan governments have been reluctant to formally involve arbakais or similar local organizations but have instead enlisted the help of tribal leaders, warlords or village elders to gain entree to such groups. Now, the help of local or provincial traditional bodies is very difficult to obtain because the central government has proved to be powerless to support the tribes facing the Taliban.

Following their conflict termination plan, the multinational forces will find tribal engagement difficult to reinitiate because many Afghan tribes have been restructured or have embraced a radical Islamic ideology during the last 30 years. Many traditional tribal leaders, with solid roots in their communities, were put aside during the last conflicts and replaced by men with guns, money, and influence to extremist groups outside of Afghanistan. As unrest has spread inside along the country, many of these new leaders have forged alliances with the Taliban, criminal organizations, and corrupt politicians. Thus, engaging and providing weapons to the tribes with such men in positions of power would be a serious mistake. Recent attempts have helped the rise of warlords who use their militias to carry out illegal activities, terrorize local populations and exacerbate ethnic tensions.

National Reconciliation

The government of Afghanistan and especially its international partners largely agree on the need to negotiate with the Taliban and the other insurgent groups. They disagree, however, on exactly whom they should talk to, on the political costs acceptable in any

negotiation, and a vision of an integrated end-state (Stapleton, 2012). Pressure for reconciliation, nominally led by the Afghan government but diplomatically endorsed by the US since 2011, finally bore some fruit in January 2012 (AfPak Channel, 2012). After a year of secret contacts between Washington and the Taliban (Clark, 2012), an agreement was reached for the Taleban rule based in Pakistan to open an office in Qatar. The US and its European allies actively promoted bringing the Taleban into the political process, hoping that this will help put an end to the conflict, easing the security transition (International Crisis Group, 2012). Mutual confidence-building measures were discussed, involving the release of some Taleban from Guantanamo Bay and a Taleban renouncement of links to al-Qaeda. While the international opinion widely agree that peace can only be reached through settlement that includes the Taleban, many Afghan leaders fear that it will not end the conflict (Landay and Youssef, 2012). In fact, the Taliban and other insurgent groups were defeated and demoralized after the 2001 intervention, and many of their leaders were willing to join the political process in exchange for protection. The Afghan government and its NATO partners, however, did not submit a political and security strategy for ensuring such protection. As a result, many former Taliban soldiers who chose to leave the fighting were imprisoned by Coalition forces. Many of these combatants then saw no alternative but to join the armed opposition.

There are significant obstacles surrounding the peace process that could take years and is unlikely to include the required means of enforcement and monitoring. The Taleban have also continued to refuse direct talks with the Afghan government representatives, insisting on considering only US a viable negotiating party. Apart from not recognizing the official Afghan government, the Taleban have are also contested the 2004 Afghan constitution, despite this being a "red line" for the US for entering any negotiations towards a peace process (Landay and Youssef, 2012).

Reactions to the US-backed reconciliation strategy are shaped by geographic and ethnic divisions. The already weak motivations for the mainly non-Pashtun north to support the process were further weakened by the assassination of Burhanuddin Rabbani, former President and head of the High Peace Council, in 2011. Northern leaders believe that the Taleban leadership is more interested in undermining the Afghan government than joining it, a view supported by the leaked December 2011 US National Intelligence Estimate which concluded that the leadership of the Taleban "remains locked into its political objectives" to retake full control of Afghanistan (Landay and Youssef, 2012). Opponents to the negotiations with the Taleban may be joined by President Karzai, reportedly infuriated by being excluded from the process (AFP, 2012).

Regional Security

Afghanistan's geography has made the country exposed to the spillover from different conflicts waged outside its borders. It has suffered from other imperial ambitions and today suffers from fights between regional powers on Afghan soil. Many regional

conflicts are currently playing themselves out in Afghanistan, including tensions and disputes between Pakistan and India, Russia and NATO, and Iran and the United States. These opposing sides need to solve their animosities and engage in an effort to build a coherent and sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

A regional meeting held in Turkey, in November 2011, and attended by thirteen states produced the Istanbul declaration which hoped to create a security framework in Central Asia region. This framework was strongly promoted from behind the scenes by the US, its NATO allies and the Afghan government. Some of the regional delegations, however, expressed concerns that NATO's withdrawal might lead to civil war, or even worse, to the breakup of the Afghan state. The final agreement reflected all these worries in its repeated references to Afghanistan's "indivisible security and territorial integrity" (Smith, 2012). The lack of consensus between the participants produces a declaration that was seen as "a series of platitudes" by some commentators (Bhadrakumar, 2012), and included no enforcement mechanism. At the same time, tensions were intensified by the signing of a strategic agreement between India and Afghanistan in October 2011 that provides for the Afghan military forces to be trained by Indian military specialists. This has strengthened the position of anti-Indian supporters in the Pakistani army, including the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency.

Among all of the South Asia's problems, the animosities between Pakistan and Afghanistan require the most attention. The inability of the Pakistani government to address radicalism in its Pashtun tribal areas, and of the Afghan government to exert more of a presence in its Pashtun-dominated south and east, have allowed extremist insurgents to further destabilize both nations. Recently, some Pakistani military and intelligence services have thrown their support behind the Taliban operating in the Pashtun belt and have disregarded the area's moderate tribal chiefs and political leaders. This has allowed the Taliban to establish bases in the region from which they can operate with impunity.

Afghanistan and Pakistan will only succeed in eradicating their insurgencies if they work together, but unfortunately to this point the two countries have approached the shared challenge from differing perspectives (Jalali, 2009). Afghanistan sees a national spread insurgency that is challenging the legitimacy of the government in Kabul. Pakistan, on the other hand, sees only a local insurgency that can be managed with a combination of military, political, and developmental means. Afghanistan believes that the presence of insurgent bases in Pakistan's tribal areas near the Afghan border, links that exist between insurgent leaders and some Pakistani intelligence agencies, drive the insurgency back into Afghanistan. Pakistan, in disagreement, believes that the insurgency is driven by public opposition to NATO air strikes and the ongoing military operations against the Taliban in the tribal areas. Also, Pakistan's persistent conflict with neighboring India related to Kashmir province is fueling Islamabad's suspicion of Indian influence

in Afghanistan and driving it to search for a way that will allow it to maintain influence in Afghanistan by manipulating the presence of the Taliban in the tribal areas.

Lately, there are some increasing tensions also between Pakistan and the US. The urgency with which the US administration labels the threat of "terrorist development, acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction" is evident in the US government's revised National Strategy for Counterterrorism (Miller and De Young, 2011). Pakistan's nuclear capacities and the presence of radical groups operating in the areas surrounding the Afghanistan-Pakistan border gave rise to a series of concerns from several US senior military and governmental representatives. Apparently, the relationship reached its crisis point after the US Special Forces operation targeted Osama Bin Laden in 2011 and later broke down altogether after a joint ISAF-Afghan patrol called in air support that resulted in the death of 24 Pakistani soldiers on the Pakistan side of the border in November 2011 (Stapleton, 2012).

The ongoing US-Iranian antagonism is another obstacle in the way of Afghan peace. Tehran would like to have a tactic capable of causing problems for the United States in Afghanistan if Washington intends to assault Iran. Iran is uncomfortable with the increasing influence of the United States in the region. Similarly, Russia and other Central Asian neighbors of Afghanistan have their own concerns stemming from the instability in Afghanistan, drug trafficking, and the presence of NATO troops in the region. While a return of the Taliban is not seen as in the interests of Iran or its northern neighbors, a series of confidence-building measures aimed at removing suspicions could go a long way in securing greater regional cooperation. For example, Iran will be interested to see Washington drop its opposition to a nonaggression pact between Kabul and Tehran, as well as making sure it does not intend to establish long-term bases in Afghanistan (Stapleton, 2012).

Economic Stability

Managing the financial dimensions of the transition may prove even more difficult than managing security. The global financial crisis has affected the entire operating support for Afghanistan, changing the funding assumptions informing transition plans, the counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign, the future resourcing of ANSF and the planned implementation of the government's national governance policy. In September 2011 the Pentagon, under pressure to make deep budget cuts, agreed to reduce expenditure on the ANSF by more than half by the end of 2014 (Cloud, 2012). In January 2013, USD 1.2 trillion in automatic spending cuts will theoretically come into force, 500 billion of which will be taken from a Pentagon budget already reduced by the earlier cuts. This will certainly influence the Afghan government's vision for "Transition and Transformation", that would require significant additional donor funding for transformation, which it defines as "a process of building Afghan state, political, social and market institutions

to render the transition sustainable" (Baker, 2012) Delegates to the 2011 Bonn conference did not make commitments to financially support this plan beyond those already made for stabilization, transition and development.

Even if there are some improvements in tax collection, the income of the Afghan government is dependent on donors. In 2009, Afghanistan received US$6 billion of Official Development Assistance (net ODA received), 14 up from US$4.8 billion in 2008. The fiscal report of the government for year 1387 (2008–09), referring to the US$4.8 billion for 2008, shows the following distribution: 48 per cent for security sector, 12% for good governance, rule of law and human rights, 13% for infrastructure and natural resources, and 10% for agriculture and rural development (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2009) Afghanistan is a net importer of goods and services. Of the estimated 29.8 million inhabitants, it is estimated that 36 per cent live below the poverty line. Per capita income for 2010—11 is estimated variously between US$466 (UN Data country profile), US$609 (World Bank) and US$1000 (CIA) (CIA World Fact Book on Afghanistan, 2012). Afghanistan's economy is dominated by the informal (including illicit drug activities) sector, which accounts for 80-90 per cent of the total economic activity. Accounting for this sector is difficult, since data are unavailable or extremely limited, yet it is this sector that largely determines the actual income of Afghan households. Indigenous factors – especially after 2014 – will increasingly be the only guarantee for survival. At the same time, the licit and illicit economic interests of Afghanistan's elites will be one of the determining factors for the country's future stability. Economic interests may help to control the future violence, but they could equally become the source of violent clashes as the resources over which they compete become scarcer. The siphoning-off of resources by current economic and political power holders obviously also has profound effects on the stability and economic development of the country.

Afghanistan is beginning to offer additional resources for exploitation beyond investment for military goods, security, and services. After the initial announcement of massive potential mineral resources broke in 2009, the Afghan government presented signature deposits, or is in the process of doing so (natural gas at Sare Pol; copper at Aynak; iron and coal at Hajigak). Although it has taken steps to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the objections raised in 2010 still hold: lack of infrastructure, the general insecurity and, above all, overall corruption, remains an obstacle for direct foreign investment. It is also unlikely that the mineral resources of Afghanistan will be shared and that the Afghan people in general will benefit. It is likely that even the trickle-down effect will be minimal, given the lack of local professional skills suited to such a specialized industry. For the immediate and midterm future, therefore, the mining reserves are unlikely to contribute too much to general Afghan wellbeing (Stapleton, 2012).

It seems likely that the role of both the Afghan and international private sector in leading economic growth will continue to be promoted as pivotal by increasingly hard-

pressed Western donors. Whether its security and political conditions will be in place for the private sector to fulfill its designated lead role in the development of the Afghan economy, in the short to medium term at least, remains doubtful. The opportunities remaining for those who stay in Afghanistan are likely to be limited primarily to the remnants of the commercial sector, the drug sector, the licit smallholder agricultural sector, and remittances. The agricultural sector contributes with about half of the GDP (excluding the opium economy). More than 75 per cent of Afghans live in rural areas, where agriculture continues to be the main economic activity. The average size of landholdings is small, however, and, as a result, agriculture is rarely the main source of food or household income (Stapleton, 2012). Expecting ODA to reduce, and given the donor fatigue that results from lack of accountability by government institutions and widespread corruption and, the need for a functioning agricultural sector remains.

The banking system is also a major missed opportunity for economic smooth transition. Due to severe banking regulations and restrictions on various international banks dealing with Afghan banks, a large number of overseas Afghans use the informal *hawala* system (an informal value transfer system) to send money home. This is a rational response given the widespread mistrust of the formal banking system and more than justified in view of the recent events surrounding the Kabul Bank from which more than US$580 million (900 million according some reports) went missing.

Conclusions

Afghanistan is currently at a tipping point where the government's legitimacy and that of its international backers is being openly challenged. The presence of al Qaeda bases in the tribal areas along the Afghanistan- Pakistan border, combined with the rise of militancy in Pakistan, are sources of increased instability, posing a security threat to the region and beyond.

During the past seven years, failure to stabilize Afghanistan under a working government has been rooted in poorly resourced and ill coordinated efforts, not solely because of the infeasibility of the announced mission. Long-term stability in Afghanistan can only be achieved through efforts directed at changing the divisive situation rather than adopting solutions at the local level solely to accommodate the existing fragmentation for temporary gains. Accommodation of traditional power structures and different ethnic groups will need to be sought through democratic participation, political and economic integration, and the development of a society and private sector capable of mitigating the negative impacts of competing groups. Increased military forces should be used only to promote the breathing space required for building Afghanistan's indigenous capacity for governance, the rule of law, individual security, and the economic empowerment of the Afghan people. Meanwhile, the new strategy needs to seek ways to reduce the risk of violence by addressing the drivers of insecurity in Afghanistan and Pakistan, while at the same time securing the legitimate interests of all regional and international parties.

In drawing conclusions about the prospects for the transition process reaching its objectives, the fundamental question raised is whether it amounts to a strategy at all. In the rush to extract themselves from the quagmire that Afghanistan has become, the US and NATO may be preparing the ground for more, rather than less, instability. There appears to be no Plan B; instead, the transition must be seen to work. The outcomes of processes aimed at ensuring the irreversibility of the security transition are increasingly viewed as at best vulnerable and at worst transient. The predicament facing the US and its NATO allies is that the costs of failure in Afghanistan, which could profoundly affect the region, must be weighed against growing domestic political pressure for a swifter exit.

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Syria. The Profile of a Conflict

Iustin MUREȘANU-IGNAT

Abstract

The current conflict in Syria between an authoritarian regime and a freedom-hungry population can only be understood if a thorough analysis is made on the background of the conflict. The conditions of Syria's geography, the population density and its ethnic and confessional structure, they all influence to the highest degree the dynamics of the Syria's Arab Spring turned civil-war. Also, a rigid political structure based upon three pillars: The Alawite Minority, The Ba'ath Party and the Military and Security Establishment, explains why the regime played various Syrian social structures against one another until the economic requirements for such a power play were no longer sustainable, leading to a bloody uprising, which end cannot be determined yet, and of which's outcome all Middle East fears.

Key words: *Syria, Alawite, Sunni, Shia, Druze, King Faisal I, Ba'ath Party, Hafez Al-Assad, Bashar Al-Assad, Six Days War, Golan Heights, Israel, Egypt, Palestine, Palestinian refugees, Arab Spring, civil war, Syrian National Council, Annan Peace Plan, Houla massacre.*

Physical geography

Syria is located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in the Middle East, bordering Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan and Israel to the south and Lebanon to the west. The country was part of a larger area that comprised the coast and the inland areas of the eastern Mediterranean Sea, also known as "Greater Syria" or the Levant. This region included most of the present day states of Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and parts of southern Turkey.

The topography of Syria is very diverse (Federal Research Division: 1987). The western part of Syria is dominated by the

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mountain ranges, Jabal an Nusayriyah and the Anti-Lebanon Range in particular. They isolate the narrow coastal plain, which runs from Turkey to the north, to Lebanon in the south. The mountain ranges prevent the rainfalls from reaching the interior of the country. Most of Syria consists largely of a semi-arid, desert plateau with lower elevations, punctuated by river basins and occasional oases.

According to its topography, Syria can be roughly divided in four main regions:

- The coast, lying between the mountains and the sea. Due to the fertility of the soil and the mild Mediterranean climate, this narrow plain benefits from an intense agricultural development and a high population density.

- The mountain region, including the hilly areas from the north to the south along the Mediterranean. The northern range, Jabal an Nusayriyah, with an average height of about 1,212m on its western slopes, abounds with historical castles and fortresses built in the Middle Ages by Crusaders and Arabs alike. To the southern end, the mountains descend into the famous Homs Gap, a traditional route for trading caravans and invaders alike, which borders the Anti-Lebanon Mountains to the south. In the far south of Syria stands the Jabal Druze mountain range, home of one of Syria's many religious minorities.

- The interior, with a large expansive plain, where the most important cities (Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Dara'a) are located. This plateau begins east of the mountains and amounts for much of the rest of Syria, to the east and north-east. Generally it is a dry land with large flat areas. The far Jazira Plain in the northeast, located between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers is an important agricultural region. It is a part of the ancient Fertile Crescent.

- The desert area (Hamad) to the southeast, along the Jordanian and Iraqi borders. Here the terrain is generally dry, rocky and mostly barren, with occasional scattered oases, once caravan towns on the Silk Road.

One of the main issues is **water**. Syria is located in an arid region of the world, with few rivers and natural lakes.

The Euphrates River is the main water source in Syria, responsible with about 80% of the country's water supply. In central Syria, the Euphrates Dam, built between 1960s and '70s, filled the imposing artificial lake Al-Assad. It serves for irrigation and as a source of hydroelectric power. The Euphrates River has long been a source of tension between Syria and Turkey on one hand, and Syria and Iraq on the other. Various water diversion projects in Turkey, and the Euphrates Dam in Syria, have poisoned Syria's relations with these two neighboring countries.

The Orontes River is the principal body of water of the western mountainous region. Originating in Lebanon, it flows northward through the mountains emptying in the
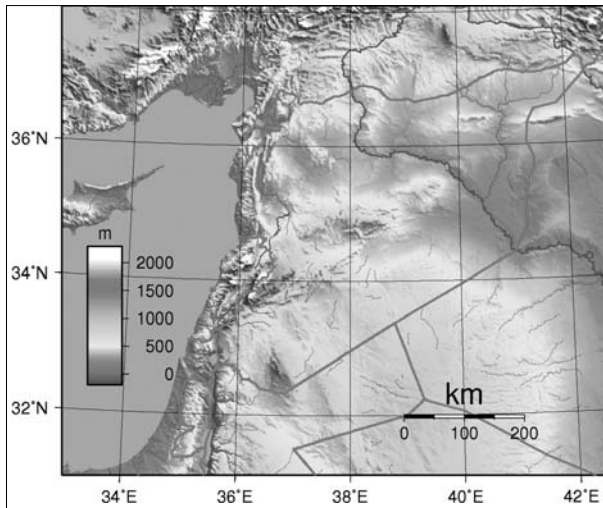
Physical map of Syria,
Courtesy of Mapsof.net

Mediterranean Sea, near Antioch, Turkey. It supplies the cities of Homs and Hama with water and is a major source of irrigation in the fertile Ghab Depression.

Syria's **population geography** is a testimony of the country's landscape. Historically, most of its people lived in rural areas, but in the last decades fast urbanization has practically split the population into rural and urban areas. These are located mainly in the "Fertile Crescent", in the southwest, northwest and northeast of the country, with the highest population densities. Areas with lower densities are in the southeast, in the desert, inhabited mainly by Bedouin tribes.
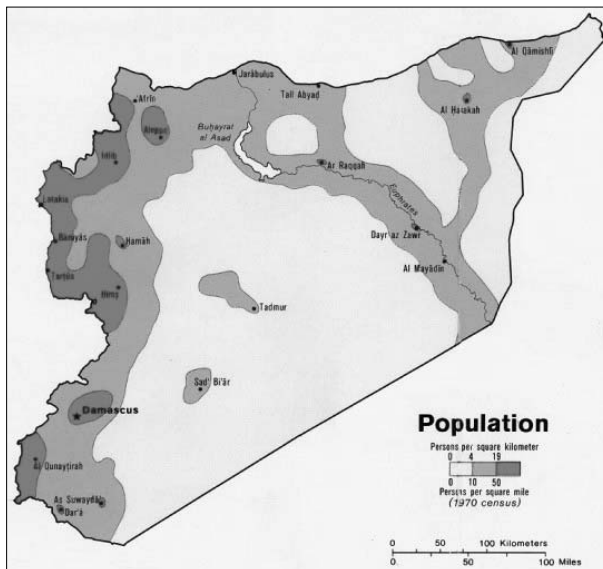
Population density in Syria,
Courtesy of World Shia Forum

The populated area of the country is no larger than 33.7%, while 90% of this area is predominantly agricultural, with only 10% assigned for buildings, various facilities and roads. As a result, population distribution is characterized by both fragmentation and concentration at the same time.

Concentration is visible with about 75% of the population living in and around the cities of Damascus and Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama (about 13% of the total area of Syria), while fragmentation can be seen by the scattering of the remaining population in the rest of the country (25% population in 87% area).

Population structure

The population of Syria is varied, and with the exception of ethnic distinctions finding religious expression, various racial types are intermixed. It is estimated most of the population is made up of Arabs (90%). The other ethnic groups include Kurds (9%), Armenians, Circassians, and Turkmen (1%) (According to the US Department of State). There are also a large number of Iraqi (1.5-2 million) and Palestinians (about 480.000) refugees (according to UNHCR).

The main language groups are Arabic (official language), Kurdish (the Kirmanji dialect), Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian, and Turkish.

Main religions are Sunni Islam (about 74%), Alawite Islam (about 11%), other Muslim denominations, including Ismaili and Ithna'ashari or Twelver Shia (about 2%), Christianity (which includes Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Maronite, Syrian Catholic, Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic, about 10%, but the number increased slightly in recent years due to the number of Iraqi Christian refugees), Druze (about 3%).

The specific demographic data for Syria is rather unreliable. Some minority groups are defined primarily by religion, others by ethnicity, and some are recent immigrants. A large number of them can also be found in neighboring countries. Physical geography and human distribution of Syria have been major factors in shaping Syrian society: towns and cities, desert, mountains and the sea. Until the 20th century the divisions between urban people, peasants and nomads were as important as religious differences.

Religious minorities are concentrated mainly on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea protected by the mountain ranges, and in the south of the country. The Alawite Muslims are the largest religious minority in Syria. They are located mainly in the coastal part of Syria, in the Nusayri Mountain range and in the interior, around Homs and Hama. Members of the Ismaili Muslims live to the south of the Alawite areas on the coast. Shiite Muslims are situated around Homs and around Aleppo.

Various Christian communities of Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics live in Damascus, Latakia and its surroundings. The Syriac Orthodox Christians live around Damascus,
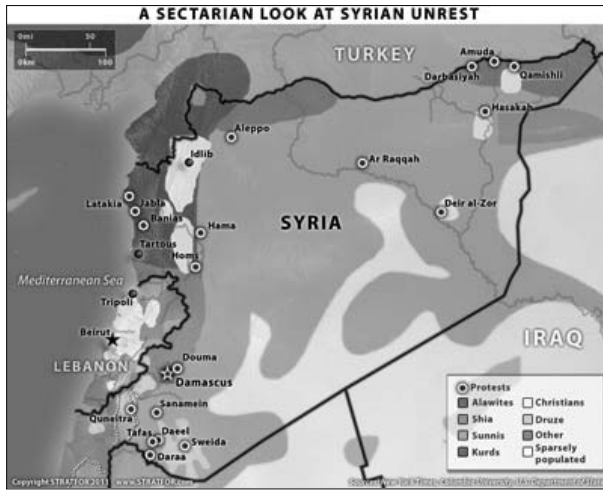
Religious map of Syria,
Courtesy of World Shia Forum

Jazira, Aleppo and Homs, and the Syrian Catholics in and around Damascus, Aleppo and Hasaka. The few Maronite Christians that live in Syria are located in and around Aleppo. They chose to remain in Syria while most of the Maronite population has fled, to what is now Lebanon, in the sixth century A.D. They kept unbroken ties with Rome since the Middle Ages. The Druze live in the south of Syria, near the border with Jordan.

Kurds are the largest ethnic minority in Syria with a population of around 1.5 million. They are scattered around the country, in the Taurus Mountains in the north, along the border with Turkey to the east and in the capital Damascus.

Other smaller ethnic minorities are the Armenians, Circassians and Turkmen. Armenians live mainly in Aleppo, Damascus and Jazira. The Circassians are descendants of the populations of North Caucasus that fled from the Russian invasions in the second half of the 19th century. They were settled mainly in the Golan area, but conflicts with the Druze around 1900 and later in the 1967 war with Israel, deprived them of the greater part of their home. They are concentrated in the southwest of Syria and in Damascus.

There are more than 480,000 Palestinians living in Syria – refugees that fled when Israel was founded in 1948 and later after the 1967 war – and their descendants. Almost half of the Palestinian population lives in refugee camps (According to the UNRWA).

After the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, probably more than 1.5 million Iraqis fled to Syria (According to Amnesty International). The open-door policy of the Syrian government led them to choose this destination inasmuch they increased the country's population with almost 10 percent, being a heavy burden on its budget. Since the conflict started in Syria in 2011 many Iraqi refugees chose to return to Iraq.

Recent history

At the end of World War I, Syria becomes a French-governed territory under a League of Nations mandate, ending the Syrian kingdom ruled by King Faisal I (1918-1923). But the French rule was not uneventful. After a number of popular uprisings, France grants partial autonomy to Syria in 1936. In 1940-1941, French Vichy forces clashes with Free France forces, supported by Britain. In 1941 they capture Syria, promising independence after the war. After popular demonstrations and French crackdowns in 1945-1946, the UN Security Council calls for the retreat of the French administration, accomplished on April 17th 1946, the current National Day of Syria.

After 1945, much like the other countries in the Middle East, internal politics in Syria was marked by instability, oscillating between civil and military regimes, while presidents and colonels were succeeding rapidly in power between 1946 and 1963. Between 1958-1961, Syria was part of the United Arab Republic together with Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser. In 1963 a coup brings to power the leftist Ba'ath party, which formally is still in power today. In 1970 the Defense Minister Hafez Al-Assad seizes power through a coup, initiating a presidential regime which continues to this day. After his death in 2000, he was succeeded in power by his son, Bashar Al-Assad.

After 1945, Syria experienced many external conflicts in its foreign policy, the most and the bloodiest with its southern neighbor, Israel. It began in 1948, when Syrian Army took part in the First Arab-Israeli War. Defeated, Syria was the last country to sign an armistice with Israel, in July 1949.

In June 1967 the Second Arab-Israeli War, also known as the 6 Days War, commences with the Israeli attack on Egypt and Syria, and later Jordan. In the first two days of conflict Syria looses the Golan Heights and the Syrian army is seriously weakened. From now and until the start of the Syrian Uprising in 2011, the return of the Golan Heights will be one of the cornerstones of Syrian policy.

The first attempt to reclaim will occur in October 1973, when Egypt and Syria launch a surprise attack against Israel, the Third Arab-Israeli War (also known as the Yom Kippur War). Caught unprepared, Israel was contemplating the greatest threat to its existence. In the first days, the Syrian army scores major successes in Golan, but a rapid Israeli mobilization and a consistent aid from the US will eventually tip the balance on the Israeli side.

Neighboring Israel, Syria was involved in the issues of the Palestinian refugees. Starting with 1948, there has been a constant flux of Palestinian refugees from Israel to nearby countries, especially Jordan, which bolstered the ranks of various Palestinian organizations. In the late 60s the increased power of these organizations threatened Jordanian authority. As a result, in the fall of 1970, Jordan reacts militarily against the Palestinians, which triggers a Syrian reaction on their side, events also known as the

Black September. Defeated in Jordan, the Palestinian militias flee, with Syrian help, to Lebanon, where this influx of refugees alters the ethnic balance in this country, and soon after contribute to a prolonged civil war. In 1976, at the request of President Sulyeman Frangieh, the Syrian army enters Lebanon, an intervention which is later approved by the Arab League. About 44,000 Syrian soldiers will be stationed here until 2005. Syria used its presence in Lebanon to play various Lebanese factions against each other and to use the Shiite organization Hezbollah against Israel.

Due to the unconditional US support for Israel during the Cold War, the dynamics of international politics steered Syria to closer relations with the USSR. Thanks to this, large quantities of military aid were shipped to Syria, mainly during the wars with Israel. In addition, the USSR obtained a naval base in the Mediterranean city of Tartus, still active for the Russian Navy.

The present conflict in Syria, also known as the Syrian Uprising, part of a greater revolt movement in many Arab countries (The Arab Spring), began on March 15th 2011, but its roots go further back in time.

After seizing power, the new Ba'ath administration severely reduced public liberties and concentrated power in the hands of the military. The Muslim Brotherhood, political and social mass movement established in 1928 in Egypt, and the main political opposition movement in the Middle East, was the first to make a stand. It's banning in 1964 marked a radicalization of its actions, through strikes and mass demonstrations in 1964 and 1965. It was brutally repressed by the army, especially in the town of Hama. In the late 70s, the Muslim Brotherhood conducts a series of attacks against Syrian officials and institutions, and in 1982, in Hama, it leads a revolt against the regime, seizing the city. The Assad regime reacted with harsh brutality. The air force pounded the city, which was stormed by the Syrian ground forces, casualties varying between 10,000-30,000 dead. This suppression meant the end of the Muslim Brotherhood as a viable opposition force in Syria.

After the death of President Hafez Al-Assad in 2000, he is succeeded by his son, Bashar Al-Assad. A medic, educated in the West and with a British-born wife, sparked numerous hopes for reforms and democratization. The so called Damascus Spring (July 2000 – August 2001) was marked by political and social reforms talks by numerous groups. It was ended with the arrest of its leaders, when they began to discuss democratic elections and civic disobedience.

Besides political conflicts, Syria is confronted with various ethnic and religious tensions. The US-led intervention in Iraq in 2003, led the Kurdish minority to demand a number of political and administrative reforms, similar to those given to their brethren in Iraq. In 2004, revolts occurred in the north-east city of Qamishli and the police clashed with protesters, which resulted in 30-100 casualties. Occasional confrontations between Kurds protesters and security forces continued in the following years.

The Arab Spring reached Syria on March 15th 2001 (Day of Rage), when two students were arrested and tortured for anti-governmental graffiti in a small southern town. When mass demonstrations demanded their release, the government responded with a brutality that escalated the protests. At first President Assad oscillated in his reactions between crackdown and reform attempts. In April 2011 the state of emergency was lifted (active since the Ba'ath party seized power in 1963), but the repressions started a few days later. Tanks were present in wavering areas and security forces were firing on protesters. Neither violence, nor the reform and dialogue attempts – called scams by the opposition – succeeded in halting the protests, which were occurring in most Syrian cities: Dara'a, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Baniyas, Jaseem, Damascus, Latakia and so on.

Throughout the spring of 2011, the protest extended and became increasingly violent, especially in the south of Syria, where the Jordanian border was closed and a number of cities (Dara'a, Qasim) were subjected to sieges by thousands of Syrian troops with tanks. The regime closed public utilities (water, power, phones) and used snipers to disperse the protesters. This is also when the first defections of the regime's repressive machine are recorded, with the first soldiers executed for refusing to shoot on protesters. The spring of 2011 witnessed the rebirth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, trying to coordinate the protests and supplying humanitarian aid for the refugees. Also the first international condemnations and sanctions began to appear, including Syria's neighbors (Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon), the country being excluded from the Arab League after using its proposed peace plan to extend the violence.

In the summer of 2011, as the crackdown continued, some thousands of Syrian soldiers defected and began attacking governmental positions, the conflict slowly transforming in a civil war. A government in exile also appeared, the Syrian National Council, but internal divisions prevented it to be recognized as such by the Western and Arab countries. The Syrian opposition still remains a fractured collection of political groups, political exiles, volunteers and armed militants, too fragmented along ideological, ethnic and confessional lines to be able to devise a rudimentary strategy to topple Assad's regime.

In February 2012 the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly for a resolution condemning the crackdown in Syria, but China and Russia, the long time protector of Syria, prevented more drastic measures. Encouraged, in March, the regime launched bloody assaults to remove the rebels from the cities of Homs and Idlib.

Ceasefire attempts continued though, in April, with the Annan Peace Plan in six points which called for an armistice without the president losing any of his powers. Syria accepted the Plan, but a week later UN Secretary General Ban-ki Moon declared that the Syrian government failed to comply with any of the Plan's requirements. Lacking any viable alternative, the UN sent 300 observers in Syria. In May 2012, after a new massacre in central Syria at Houla, where most of the victims were women and children, many Western states expelled the Syrian ambassadors, with warnings of an impending

military intervention. In June, the UN suspended its observer mission due to escalation of violence. The regime's repressive actions led to tens of thousands of refugees fleeing in the neighboring countries. As of June 2012 there was an estimated 44,000 in Lebanon, 24,000 in Turkey, 4,000 in Iraqi Kurdistan and 120,000 in Jordan.

Political Structure

The 1973 Constitution of Syria was modified in 1984 and later in February 2012. It arranged for a republican government and postulated that the national sovereignty resides in the Syrian people. The power is divided in three branches: executive, legislative and judicial.

The Syrian Parliament is the one-chamber People's Assembly (Majlis al-Shaab). It has 250 members elected by all adult Syrian citizens for a four-year mandate. At least 50% of the Assembly must represent workers and peasants. The People's Assembly passes laws, discusses governmental policies, approves the budget and various development plans, ratifies international treaties and nominates the candidate for the office of the President of the Republic. The Syrian Parliament has the authority to debate, amend and approve legislation and the presidential decrees. It can debate motions of no-confidence in various ministers or the government, which must resign if passed.

The People's Assembly debates and passes legislation. All such laws are subject to review by the president, who can promulgate it or return to the Assembly for further debates. If the second vote gets a two-thirds majority of the deputies present and at least an absolute majority of all members, then the president must issue the law. One third of the People's Assembly members can propose a constitutional amendment, which must get an absolute majority vote and the presidential approval to become law. The Syrian President has executive and some legislative powers. He serves a 7 year term. The previous constitution stipulated that the People's Assembly nominated the presidential candidate which then was to be approved in a popular referendum, without any opponents. If he failed to be approved, the nominating process and the referendum were repeated. Since February 2012 there are free elections for the Office of the President of the Republic. The next elections are to be held in 2014.

The President appoints a number of state officials, such as: the vice presidents, the prime minister and the cabinet members, various civil servants and military personnel (since 2005 he is also able to fire civil servants). He is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, can declare war and make peace. The President promulgates the laws approved by the legislative branch, the People's Assembly. He can reject a law and return it to the Assembly within a month. He can dissolve the People's Assembly with new parliamentary elections to be held within 90 days. He can assume the legislative authority when the Assembly is not in session, but the presidential decrees must be confirmed when the Assembly reconvenes. The President can also assume legislative

authority "in case of absolute need relating to national security", and can call national referendums, which are compulsory and effective from their promulgation date by the President. The constitution gives the President broad emergency powers, effective in Syria throughout 1963-2011.

The President can be removed from office only for charges of high treason. The Assembly initiates the impeachment by a vote of two thirds of its members. He then is tried by the Supreme Constitutional Court, where he is a member.

There was an important note in Article 8 of the previous constitution, which stated that the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party was the leading party of society and the state, and the head of the National Progressive Front. The Front approved the five-year development plans, discussed the economic policy, laid down policies for a national, socialist education and determined the general political orientation of the state. This Article was removed from the new constitution adopted in February 2012, along with all other provisions regarding the Ba'ath Party, allowing for a more diverse political life.

The Syrian legal system is inspired from a number of legal traditions: Civil Law, Islamic and Egyptian. The Syrian Constitution guarantees the independence of the judiciary. The administrative authority of the judicial branch is vested in the Supreme Judicial Council, presided by the President.

In Syria two judicial systems are active. They have separate courts for secular and religious affairs. The secular courts can attend civil and criminal cases. The religious courts have a specialized jurisdiction. The Shari'a courts attend cases of personal status, family or inheritance disputes between Syrian Muslims and non-Syrian Muslims who observe the Islamic law in their countries. The Doctrinal Courts are specialized for the Druze community, with a judge of the Druze sect. The Spiritual Courts deal with matters of Christian, Jewish and other non-Muslim religious groups. The decisions of these religious courts may be subject of appeal to specialized division of the Court of Cassation.

The Supreme Constitutional Court has the power to rule on the constitutionality of laws, settle electoral disputes and try the President in case of impeachment. The Supreme Court has seven members appointed by the President for renewable terms of four years.

Public administration in Syria had undergone through a centralized hierarchy and planning. The local administration exists mainly at municipal level. The country is divided in 14 governorates headed by governors which were appointed by the Ministry of the Interior (until February 2012) and accountable only to the president. They controlled the provincial government offices, the ministries' local offices and the state-owned enterprises.

Below the provinces were the districts, counties and villages, administered by locally elected bodies, heavily dependent on the central government. All their budgets are included into one central, national one issued by the Ministry of Finance. They receive

all their funds from the central government and any potential excess revenues are returned to Damascus.

This may all sound well on paper, but in practice it produced a concentration of power to the presidential office, which controlled the military, the political and the administrative system, as well as the bureaucratic structure of Syria. The Prime Ministers are often concerned with standard administration and economic policies, but the more important domains of defense, foreign policy and such are exclusively within the president's hands. This arrangement has been described as "a republic under a military regime with virtually absolute authority in the hands of the President," and that despite their right to vote, citizens "do not have the right to change their government." (According to the US State Department).

In reality the regime is based rather upon an intricate web of societal factors, than on the structural institutions provided by the Syrian Constitution. Much as in the other countries of the Middle East, the Syrian population has a number of divisions along ethnic (Arabs, Kurds) and, more importantly, confessional lines between the Sunni Muslims majority and the Alawite, Druze, Shiite and several Christian minorities. Contrary to the secularism of the Ba'ath Party, religious sects are important in the country, being symbols of group identity and grounds for political orientation.

In addition, inside these ethnic and sectarian groups there are strong tribal and clan dispositions, which often constitute the basis for various political alliances on short and long term. Moreover, overlapping these patterns is a number of divisions along social and economic lines: peasantry, workers, merchants, public sector employees, army officials and political elite. In the end, various geographic differences and local loyalties divide the Syrian society, such as the historic rivalry between Syria's two largest cities of Damascus and Aleppo or the isolation of the Alawite minority on the Mediterranean coast. In order to preserve legitimacy, Syrian leaders, although authoritarian, have deemed necessary to follow policies that are able to accommodate, to some extent, the various centers of power within a population this diverse. The most important of these power centers, which are the basis of support for the Assad regime, are: the Alawite sect, the Ba'ath Party and the military and security establishment.

The Alawite religious sect, an offshoot of the Shiite Islam, constitutes about 12% of the Syrian population. In the first half of the 20th century it has been one of the poorest and socially disadvantaged in Syria, due to their religious isolation being perceived almost like heretics. They rose rapidly in the hierarchy of the army and Ba'ath Party since the 1960s and managed to dominate Syrian politics since then. The Alawite community and the Assad family in particular have been an important power base for the previous Syrian President Hafiz Al-Assad and appear, for the time being, united behind his son and successor. As such, the majority of the key positions, especially in the security apparatus, are in Alawite hands, giving rise to beliefs that the current weakening of

the regime's power and civil war might trigger a power struggle between inveterate Alawites and the majority Sunni Muslims (over 70% of the population), degenerating in a religious, sectarian war.

The Ba'ath Party[*], socialist, pan-Arab, a rival wing of the one that governed Iraq until 2003, assumed power in 1963. It is estimated to have about 2 million members and is the leading political force in a multi-party coalition, the National Progressive Front, which has won the elections to the Syrian parliament since 1998. The Ba'ath Party offers political legitimacy for the Assad regime, but the party is rather a tool for implementing various policies. Although the majority of the Ba'ath Party is not Alawite, there is a special, elaborate, relationship between the party and the Syrian minority, giving rise to opinions that "Alawites rule Syria"(Hirst: 1979) or "a rule by Alawi-dominated Ba'athists" (Van Dam: 1996).

The Ba'ath Party works closely with the governmental bureaucracy and public administration to enforce the will of the president, which is the Secretary-General of the party. These sets of institutions extend down to city, village and even neighborhood. Together with a province governor, a secretary of a provincial branch represents the president. He supervises the provincial administration in various fields, like education, heath, culture, sports and such. This is done through party members and party departments integrated throughout the government institutions, reporting back to provincial secretaries.

As such, with the exception of a major governmental shift, the Syrian president is required to obtain the support of the Ba'ath Party machine. Its highest decisional body, the "Regional Command", controls policy-making in Syria and it's a springboard for accession in Syrian leadership. When Bashar Al-Assad was succeeding his father in June 2000, one of the first moves was for him to be elected in the position of Secretary General of the Regional Command. From there he populated the government with his supporters.

It was believed that after the demise of the Ba'ath Party rule in Iraq in 2003, its Syrian branch would collapse as well. There was little evidence of that possibility even after the beginning of the Syrian Uprising in March 2011. The question that still remains is that after more than four decades of Ba'athist rule in Syria and the absence of alternative political life, the country would have no viable political leadership.

The **Military and Security Establishment** has a long history in Syria, preceding the installation of the Ba'ath Party regime. The frictions between various factions in the

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[*] The new Syrian Constitution (February 2012) makes no provisions regarding the Ba'ath Party or the National Progressive Front and stipulates free political elections in 2013. As such, our analysis may prove wrong after these elections.

military was the primary cause of political instability in Syria, as the army coteries struggled for power and changed the governments quite frequently. This came at an end after 1970, when Hafiz Al-Assad achieved an unquestioned position over the military. He appointed his supporters, especially members of the Alawite minority, in key command positions in the military and intelligence forces, thus creating reliable elite to help him maintain his regime.

The Ba'ath Party and governmental departments and activities are subjected to a close monitoring by four security agencies. These are the General Intelligence under the Ministry of the Interior, Political Security, also under the command of the Ministry of the Interior, and the Military and Air Force Intelligence, under the nominal supervision of the Ministry of Defense. Overlapping these agencies is the Bureau of National Security, a branch of the Ba'ath Country Leadership (James: 1991).

This intricate construction of a repressive apparatus created an atmosphere of competition between these security agencies. In their struggle for power and resources, a number of their leaders began to use their close relationship with the president to increase their influence to the point where these bodies were stronger than their nominal supervisor ministry. As such, these agencies have a critical authority in political, administrative and economic decisions and answer only to the president.

The current Syrian President, Bashar Al-Assad, did not have such powerful connections in the military. When his brother, Basil Al-Assad died, he returned from London in 1994 and held a number of military positions, such as the head of the Presidential Guard, with the rank of colonel. When he became president, he inherited a powerful political and military machine that ensured a smooth succession, but more important, imposed limitations on his freedom of action. This generated a number of conflicting viewpoints between "the old guard" and the president, made apparent with the paradoxical perception of Bashar Al-Assad as being popular, while the authoritarian regime was not.

Economic structure (World Bank Country Reports)

The economic structure of Syria is highly centralized, resembling much the country's political structure. With the accession to power of the Ba'ath Party in 1963, the economy suffered a powerful centralization, following the party's socialist ideology. The main source of income for the Syrian economy derives from the export of oil. Tourism was, until 2011, the second biggest generator of revenues. Other exports include: minerals, natural gas, cotton, textiles, clothing and agricultural products, such as meat and live animals, wheat, coffee and tea. Until 2003, another major source of income was the agreement with Saddam's Iraq to use Syrian seaports during the international economic sanctions.

Syrian economy is centered on oil exports, and was making good progress between 1990-1995, due to a number of oil discoveries and economic reforms undertaken by

the Assad regime. This progress slowed when US labeled Syria a "pariah state" with the investors leaving the country, and the economic reforms were slowed. In the early 2000s it recovered for a while due to increased oil exports and economic relations with Iraq. With the US-led invasion in 2003, the Iraqi revenues disappeared, along with a significant reduction in the number of tourists. Also, the Iraqi refugees fleeing into Syria provided a serious drain on its resources. The economy recovered after 2004 with the high oil prices on the international market, growing constantly until 2011 and made a smooth transition during the financial crisis.

The main challenges for Syria's economy are (IMF Country Reports):

- The sanctions initiated by the US and its status as a "pariah state" which reduced tourism and foreign investment. The Assad regime's actions in the recent years and after the beginning of the Syrian Uprising did not have a positive effect on the economy;

- Lack of investments based on centralized economy and few economic reforms for enabling them. The Direct Foreign Investments are just a small percentage, 2.5% of GDP;

- The high unemployment rate, up to 20%. This problem is increased by the rapid population and labor force growth rate, of about 5% per year. The highly centralized Syrian government seems unable to cope with this;

- Depleting oil reserves put a strain on the Syrian development plans. It is believed that the oil reserves are almost depleted, and Syrian government has done little to provide alternative oil sources;

- Syria's water supplies are not used rationally, being consumed faster that their replacement. They are also plagued by pollution, a poor water management and a rising number in population;

- The country's Public Debt raised to 89% of the GDP. In addition, Syria has $21.55 billion in External Debt amounting to 45% of the GDP. With the outbreak of the Syrian Uprising and civil war, Syria's ability to acquire loans from international credit agencies has practically vanished.

Syria's main economic concern is what happens when the oil runs out. It is currently considering whether the textile industry could become the next avenue of major income. It is also searching for ways to liberalize foreign trade, improve the business environment and strengthen the market mechanisms in the private sector.

The Syrian government has taken a number of steps to improve its economy. It has concluded the terms for the Association Agreement with the EU, has joined the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) and has a free trade agreement with Turkey (European

Commission Reports). Also, Syria has witnessed an increase of the private banking, but the state-owned banks still hold most of the money in Syria.

If the economic reforms slow down or, with the current conflict situation – are halted, and with the depleting oil reserves at the horizon, the economic future of Syria looks very bleak indeed.

Social structure

It is important to accept that the concept of social classes is required to analyze the social structures of the Arab world, and implicitly Syria. It is very difficult to understand the social reality and Syrian internal dynamics without the concepts of social classes and class conflict. In the case of Syria, the peasants/workers, the state employees, the "bourgeoisie" and the business elite, have marked the last 50 years with their clashes.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the main social struggles were between the bourgeoisie and the rural peasants. When the Ba'ath Party acceded to power in 1963, it began to implement large-scale nationalizations and land reforms, which had a severe effect on the business community. The workers, both urban and rural were the main beneficiaries of these economic reforms and offered the regime their widespread support. Together with the rapid urbanization of the country, they had occupied the state institutions and popular organizations, many pursuing public servants careers. They were, until recently, a major power base for the Assad regime.

After seizing power in 1970, Hafiz Al-Assad terminated the more radical socialist economic measures started in 1963. His "Corrective Movement" turned to a more mixed economy, which expanded the private sector and led to the emergence of a new and visible, though not so large, class of entrepreneurs and businessmen enriched in real estates, trade and constructions, and was open for new social and political alliances.

This class (called "the velvet generation"), which included bureaucrats who had capitalized on their positions to monopolize government contracts, allied with and assimilated the parts of the old Sunni elite, co-opted by Assad regime. A new ruling class emerged from this union of business partnerships and marital alliances that combined the money and prestige of the old with power and prestige of the new. It granted the Assad regime its gratitude and allegiance for decades, but plagued Syrian society with bribery, corruption, patronage and favoritism.

The relationship between the high-ranking officials and the enterprising class became so important, that the regime was dubbed "a military-mercantile complex" – an alliance between an Alawite-dominated military and security apparatus and the business community, being at the core of Hafiz Al-Assad's tightening grip over Syria.

This alliance was put to the test and resisted most successfully in the late 70s and early 80s. During this period the rule of the Ba'ath Party and of Hafiz Al-Assad was challenged

by Islamist forces and left-wing parties. When the merchants of Aleppo called a national strike in 1980, many doubted the regime's ability to remain in power, but the Damascus merchants sided with the regime and kept their businesses open. This spectacular support has prevented the collapse of the regime.

The various relationships Hafiz Al-Assad created and maintained with different parts of Syrian society gave Syria its first period of stability since the independence. By maintaining the alliances between the Ba'ath Party and the working classes and between the Alawite-dominated security apparatus and parts of the business elite, Assad put an end to the earlier period of instability and military coups.

The support of the lower classes was won by a combination of populist rhetoric and ideology. A high level of the welfare state championed by the socialist Ba'ath Party, with jobs in administration and major projects of infrastructure pleased both the peasants and the workers. The peasants especially gained much in their standard of living, mainly through government subsidies and redistribution of land, though this policy did not prove to be entirely successful. In many cases the role of the landlord as a patron, local leader and money-loaner was replaced by the Ba'ath Party officials, and in other cases large estates were created by rich landowners.

During the second half of the 20th century, the majority of the Syrian population remained surprisingly stable. The absence of a large industrial sector meant the absence of a true proletariat of low-class factory workers. The approximate size of Syria's "working class" was about 15% at the end of the 20th century.

The absence of this social class of industrial factory workers is compensated by a large and prosper group of craftsmen and artisans, producing basic commodities such as: textiles, shoes, soap and other various crafts in small cottage industries. These small entrepreneurs are the main component of Syria's traditional middle class, which also comprises shopkeepers, small landowners and white-collar employees, and amounts to about 30% of the population.

Since the Ba'athist revolution in 1963, a new rising class of civil servants, doctors, teachers, lawyers and other professionals has emerged. This new component of the middle class rose from the other lower or middle classes through secular higher education. This education became a status criterion among Syrians, since higher education guaranteed an entry in the high-status and high-income jobs. Despite the emergence of such an educated class, the traditional conservatism of a still large rural society had a strong influence in the 90s Syria.

Another distinction in the stratification of Syrian society resides, similarly to other Middle Eastern countries, in its division in three groups: the town, the village and the tribe, all with their particular values. The members of these three structural segments of the Syrian society regard the others as socially distinct. This distinction can be identified

by various differences in accent, clothing, customs, food, and the intermarriages between families from the villages, towns and tribes are still considered unusual.

As the 20ᵗʰ century modernization steadily affected the Syrian society, the differences and the social distance between the city and the town steadily increased. Western customs, ideas, techniques, language and other elements of a radical foreign culture were adopted firstly in the cities, especially by the Christian minorities, and increased the gap between the city and the village that shrank little with the passing of time. The fast urbanization that occurred since the 70s only managed to translate the town-village differences into city-suburbs/slums differences. Only the improvement of infrastructure and the mass communication in the 80s and 90s managed to somewhat unify the city with the countryside in a more uniform culture.

In the mid-80s the Syrian economy was hit hard by the collapse of the oil prices, which severely reduced state revenues and threatened the stability of the Syrian welfare state and its economic policies. Although the oil prices surged again in the late 80s and early 90s, the forecasted depletion of the oil reserves made the oil-revenues uncertain in the long term. As such, the welfare state became increasingly difficult to maintain. This was even more dangerous as the support of the lower classes had relied heavily on this welfare state.

In order to overcome the economic crises, the Assad regime inaugurated a new stage of economic liberalization, also known as "the second infitah". The regime's purpose was to switch the lower class loyalty, expected to decrease in near future, with that of the broader parts of the bourgeoisie. The regime tried to achieve this switch through the creation of a more business-friendly environment. This was enacted by economic reforms (notably Law no. 10/1991), which allowed foreign investments and provided tax and customs fees exemptions. Bashar Al-Assad carried out further economic reforms, intending to achieve a "social free-market economy". The rationality of these reforms for economic liberalization may have been true on paper, but were quite risky in the real-life Syria. The reduction of the state's role in economy and the subsequent reduction of civil servants and state subsidies, made the lower classes accelerate their alienation from the regime.

The economic reforms of the 90s and early 2000 solved some problems, but created other, new ones. Inflation rose to 15% in 2008, unemployment has been keeping steady at about 20% in the last few years, while the fuel oil prices have increased by half between December 2008 and September 2010. The liberalization of agricultural products coupled with years of severe drought in the late 2000s and a certain neglect of Syrian agriculture also increased the antagonism of the agricultural classes. The worst hit were the regions around Dara'a (where the Syrian Uprising began in March 2011), Deir El-Zor and Quamishly. The contradiction between a populist political discourse

and less-populist economic measures broke the "social contract": the welfare state that provides jobs and guarantees cheap basic goods in exchange for allegiance.

On the other hand, the economic reforms had little of the expected effects on the business class. This class had largely benefited from the economic opening of the last 20 years, but some difficulties remained, that prevented it from pledging its full loyalty to the state. The Assad regime carried a general mistrust of the bourgeoisie, rooted in its Ba'athist socialist ideology, together with the bureaucratic maze and the uncertainty of the legal framework.

What appeared to be the most dangerous consequences of these reforms are the cracks that began to emerge in the decades-old alliance between the business elite and the military and security establishment. With the reduction of the available public spending, many regimes figures have taken the opportunity of the economic opening to enter the private market, instead of making a career in the army or administration. They have increasingly alienated larger parts of the business class with the aid of close relations with the regime, by corruption and the use of state machine in their own interests.

In the context of the current national uprising, which had degenerated into civil war, the larger part of the business community had largely remained neutral. Without giving its support to the government, it has favored political stability, unsure of which side to take. A small minority of this business class, which maintains a close and corrupt relationship with the top state officials, has decided to support the Assad regime.

As a conclusion, for the last two decades the Assad regime (both father and son) have tried to strengthen the basis of their support by implementing economic reforms aimed at co-opting the Syrian business class. These reforms instead alienated the lower classes, which rose in revolt in March 2011. So far the conflict appears to be restricted to these two sides, but the longer it lasts, the more tempted the business class – the Syrian bourgeoisie, currently neutral and on the side of the "silent majority" – will be to end it by allying itself either with the Assad regime or the opposition.

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Sudan vs. Sudan. Conflict, Peace and Oil

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Abstract

In the recent months events in South Sudan and Sudan have led many people to ask whether the two countries are at war or peace, and how peaceful each of them is internally. The two countries' armies have clashed directly and cross-border incursions have recurred. People (civilians and combatants) have been killed and injured in violence, and the economy of each country has begun to stagnate or contract, together causing a mounting toll of suffering and loss of life. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the past 50 years of conflict between the two Sudans, and, more important, an analysis of the most important conflict drivers for this new tense situation. The article will present some key internal challenges for both states which are more important for a future long-standing peace than the oil sharing revenues or the shared national debt. Not least, this article will criticize the CPA, which it was considered a great achievement but in the last seven years it created a lot of problems due to its abstract construction.

Kew words: *Sudan, South Sudan, First Sudanese War, Second Sudanese War, Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Abyei, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, Dinka, Nuer, Azande, Misseriya Arabs, Omar al-Bashir.*

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General facts

Sudan, officially the Republic of the Sudan and sometimes now called North Sudan, is an Arab state in North Africa. Until last year, Sudan was the largest country in Africa and the Arab world, and the 10th largest in the world, area-wise. Now, after the South proclaimed its independence, Sudan is bordered by Egypt to the north, the Red Sea to the northeast, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, South Sudan to the south, the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west, and Libya to the northwest – a zone known to the rest of the world for the violent conflicts in the past century. The

population of Sudan is a combination of indigenous inhabitants of the Nile Valley, and descendants of migrants from the Arabian Peninsula, due to whom today the Arab culture predominates in Sudan and the majority of the population adheres to Islam. Sudanese Arabs are by far the largest ethnic group in Sudan and they are almost entirely Muslims. While the majority speaks Sudanese Arabic, some other Arab tribes speak different Arabic dialects like Awadia and Fadnia. Officially a federal presidential representative democratic republic, the politics of Sudan is widely considered to be authoritarian due to the control of the National Congress Party of the three branches of government. Shortly after the Islamic Conservatives seized power in a coup in 1989, Sudan increasingly became a fundamentalist Islamic state **(**the political system of the Republic of Sudan was restructured following a military coup on June 30, 1989, when al-Bashir, then a colonel in the Sudanese Army, led a group of officers and ousted the government of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi). Under al-Bashir's leadership, the new military government suspended political parties and introduced the Sharia code at a national level. Sudan had a difficult relationship with many of its neighbors and with much of the international community, because of its radical Islamic position. Consequently, the majority of Sudan's neighbors accused President Bashir for supporting Islamic rebels in Egypt (the assassination attempt against Hosni Mubarak), Eritrea, Uganda or Chad (on December 23, 2005, Chad declared war on Sudan and accused the country of being the „common enemy of the nation"). As it considered it a safehaven for terrorism, the U.S. began to list Sudan on its famous list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. Even with those problems, Sudan is a member of the United Nations, the African Union, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Non-Aligned Movement; additionally, Sudan is serving as an observer in the World Trade Organization.

On the other hand, South Sudan is the newest nation in the world (193rd member of UN) and in Africa (54th member of the African Union). South Sudan is bordered by Ethiopia to the east, Kenya to the southeast, Uganda to the south, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the southwest, the Central African Republic to the west, and Sudan to the north. Like its northern neighbor, South Sudan is highly diverse ethnically and linguistically; among the largest ethnic groups there is the Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Azande, and Shilluk. Unlike the predominantly Muslim population of Sudan, the South Sudanese follow indigenous traditional religions (Animist), while there is also a minority of Christians – a result of Christian missionary efforts. South Sudan is a member of the United Nations, the African Union, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. South Sudan plans to join the Commonwealth of Nations, the East African Community, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Full membership in the Arab League has been assured, if the government chooses to seek it, though it could also opt for an observer status. On November 3, 2011, it was admitted to UNESCO and on November 25, 2011, it joined the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a regional grouping of East African states, a first step in order to be accepted into the East African Community.

Three months ago, in July, South Sudan signed the Geneva Conventions. The Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan established a mixed presidential system of government, headed by a president who is head of state, head of government, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. It also establishes the National Legislature comprising two houses.

History of the conflict

It was stated before that the entire zone is known to the world for its violent conflicts in the past century, and Sudan is no exception. Two rounds of North-South civil war cost the lives of nearly two million people and rendered another 4 million homeless, and a continuing conflict in the western region of Darfur has driven two million people away from their homes and killed more than 200,000 – mostly civilians. North-South tensions go back decades, even before Sudan's independence in 1956, with deep roots in the ancient and medieval history of the zone. Missionaries converted the region to Christianity in the 6th century, but the influx of Muslim Arabs eventually controlled the area and replaced Christianity with Islam. During the 16th century, a people called the Funj conquered much of Sudan, and several other black African groups settled in the South, including the Dinka, Nuer, and Azande. Egyptians conquered Sudan in 1874, and after Britain occupied Egypt in 1882, it took over Sudan in 1898, ruling the country in conjunction with Egypt. Sudan was a collection of small, independent kingdoms and principalities from the beginning of the Christian era until 1820-1821, when Egypt conquered and unified the northern portion of the country. However, neither the Egyptian nor the Mahdist state (1883-1898) had any effective control of the southern region outside of a few garrisons. Southern Sudan remained an area of fragmented tribes, subject to frequent attacks by slave raiders**.** Britain and Egypt jointly administered Sudan from 1899 until its independence in 1956. British authorities treated the south provinces as a separate region, and barred northern Sudanese from entering or working in the South. The British justified this „closed door" policy by claiming that the South was not ready for exposure to the modern world, but in fact the plan was to create a buffer zone in Southern Sudan against any Islamic expansion into Africa's inland. As a result, the South remained isolated and obsolete under British rule. This condominium policy for Southern Sudan in 1930 states that „[…] the approved policy is to act upon the fact that the peoples of the Southern Sudan are distinctively African and Negroid, and that our obvious duty is therefore to push ahead as fast as we can with their economic and educational development on African and Negroid line and not upon the Middle-eastern and Arab lines of progress which are suitable for the Northern Sudan. It is only by economic and educational development that these people can be equipped to stand up for themselves in the future, whether their lot can be eventually cast with the Northern Sudan or with East Africa for partly with each" (Deng, 1994). The situation was the same even after 1946, when North and South Sudan were merged, the majority

of political and administrative power was allocated to the North, leaving many in the South resentful. Southern Sudanese believed they were not part of the North. It was only unfortunate for them that the colonizing powers reversed this policy in 1945 as follows: „[...] The policy of the Sudanese government regarding Southern Sudan is to act upon the fact that the peoples of the Southern Sudan are distinctively African and Negroid, but that geography and economics combine (so far as can be foreseen at the present time) to render them inextricably bound for future development to the Middle Eastern and Arabised Northern Sudan, and therefore to ensure that their educational and economic development will equip them to stand up for themselves in the future as socially and economically the equals of their partners of Northern Sudan in the Sudan of the future" (Deng, 1994). In the lead up to independence, in 1956, the South initiated a rebellion motivated by fears of further marginalization.

The rebellion transformed into what is now known as The First Sudanese Civil War (August, 1955 - March, 1972) between Anya Nya and the Sudanese Government, with half a million deaths (only one out of five was armed) and other hundreds of thousands forced to leave their homes. This conflict was ended by a peace agreement signed in 1972. The settlement was soon broken by violations of the peace agreement, division of the regions, and the nationwide imposition of Sharia law. This exacerbated the rift between the Arab North, the seat of the government, and the black African Animists and Christians in the South. Differences in language, religion, ethnicity, and political power erupted in what is known as The Second Sudanese Civil War (June, 1983 - January, 2005). At the end of the war, roughly two million people had died as a result of war, famine and disease, and another four million people in Southern Sudan had been displaced at least once (and often repeatedly) – it was one of the most violent conflicts since World War II. In 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party (NCP) in Khartoum, bringing an official end to the conflict. In accordance with the CPA, a referendum was held on January 9th, 2011, to decide whether the South should remain part of Sudan or become independent. The result was almost unanimous, over 99% opted for independence (South Sudan Referendum Commission, 2011; Declaration of Independence, 2011), but the causes of the conflict have still not been solved. South Sudan celebrated its first day as a nation Saturday with more than 30 African heads of state, high-level Western officials and one leader who fought to prevent this from happening – Sudan President Omar al-Bashir. Independence was celebrated by a football game, flowers were planted, and official buildings were given a new paint and it seemed that a long lasting peace was finally established in the zone. But it was not. In the following months we witnessed a game of cat and mouse, with both countries taking turns playing both roles, incursions across the border being a regular activity on both countries' agenda. In late January, South Sudan closed all its 300 oil wells from Unity State to choke Sudan's oil revenue flow, after the latter seized South Sudan crude oil

worth 815 million dollars. The retaliation was not long awaited, and it was a violent one, with the North bombing Unity's oil infrastructure and then going straight to occupying the region. The same President al-Bashir, a sad, angry, and frustrated participant at the celebration of South Sudan's independence, in July 2011, now had the opportunity to pay his dues. Very proud and sure of himself, President Bashir immediately hailed that he had „fertilized the soil with the South's dead people", a surprising statement given that the action had generated immediate response, the South occupying Heglig – an area vital for Sudan's economy, representing half of the 115,000 barrels/day, that had remained in the North after division.

Causes of the conflict

Even with the CPA in 2005 and the South independence in 2011, tensions and violence are present even today between the two Sudans. Neither the CPA nor the vote for independence addressed many issues which remain unresolved today: border demarcation is particularly problematic, as 20% of the new border has not been agreed upon, tens of thousands of refugees have fled from the conflict areas, and post-independence citizenship complications have become a major issue with an estimated 2 million South Sudanese living in the North; the logistics of splitting oil revenues is considered the main issue for the new tensions, and the 38 billion dollars national debt have yet to be worked out. In the last weeks, the leaders of Sudan and South Sudan resumed talks in Addis Ababa, giving it another try in order to discuss and resolve their long-lasting disputes, but the outcome was the same, all the issues remain unresolved.

The causes of the conflict in Sudan are plentiful and they are rooted in tribal, economic, religious, social, and political factors. Some of them are structured causes, some are proximity causes, while others are triggers – but each and every one of them plays a significant role in the conflict.

Structural causes

The South and North are distinct ethnic groups and nationalities, with diametrically opposed social, cultural, linguistic, and religious differences, as well as historical animosities retrospect to the period of the slave trade period. The Sudanese region is inhabited by two distinctive groups of people: the Arabs, who predominantly inhabit the Northern part of the country, and the black Africans, who are mainly Christian and Animist, and who occupy the Southern region. Like for many conflicts in Africa, much of what caused the Sudan conflict can be traced back to its colonial past.

Britain and Egypt jointly administered Sudan from 1899 until its independence in 1956. The British found an overwhelmingly Muslim, but highly stratified society in the North. Wealth, power, and high social status were concentrated in the hands of the Arabs, who were primarily located around the Nile Valley and centered in Khartoum, and whose

identity was marked not only by the fluency in Arabic and immersion in Arab culture, but also by affiliation to Arab lineages, clans, and tribes. British authorities treated the South provinces as a separate region, and justified their "closed door" policy by claiming that the South was not ready for exposure to the modern world (Deng, 1994).

In the South, the administration aimed to build up a series of self-contained tribal units with structure and organization based upon indigenous customs, traditional practices, and beliefs, by isolating the South from Northern economic development and cultural influence, with the intention of integrating the South with British East Africa. As a result, the South remained isolated under British rule. In the early '20s, the British passed the Closed Districts Ordinances, which stipulated that passports were required for travel between the two zones, and permits were required to conduct business from one zone into the other. In the South, English, Dinka, Bari, Nuer, and Azande were official languages, while in the north, Arabic and English were used as official languages. Islam was discouraged by the British in the South, where Christian missionaries were permitted to work. The vast majority of infrastructure developments, such as the „Gezira" irrigation scheme, the cotton industry, and most of the modern railways, were all built in the North. Consequently, the preponderance of commercial activity was concentrated in the Northern region. By contrast, the South remained in total poverty. The South had only one role to play: that of producer of raw materials. They became the workers, and even slaves, of the Northerners (Johnson, 2006). The situation was the same even after 1946, when North and South Sudan were merged, as most political and administrative power was allocated to the North, leaving many in the South resentful. More so, the North even tried to „Islamise" and „Arabise" the South, and it was due to this fact that first sparked the conflict which goes on today.

Concluding, the long-lasting conflict in Sudan reflects the long standing economic disparities, political exclusion, and social and cultural deprivation in the distribution of political and economic power between the centre and the peripheries. The country inherited a highly centralized authoritarian governance system and an uneven pattern of regional development from colonialism. These structural elements shaped the later evolution of the modern Sudanese state, and contributed to the marginalization of the peripheries, especially in the South.

Proximity causes

Border Demarcation

Even in Sudan's colonial times, when the British governed the North and South as two separate states, the North-South border was never clearly defined. While there has been some agreement over the exact demarcation along some areas of the border, other areas remain contested between the two governments and between local communities and

tribes who fail to recognize any North-South demarcation. For nomads who migrate between the North and South – depending on their farming patterns, the refusal of President Omar al-Bashir to offer dual citizenship means any border demarcation could become seriously contentious.

One area of particular contention along the border is the Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan areas (collectively known as the „Three Areas"). Abyei is an oil-producing region claimed by both North and South; South Kordofan and Blue Nile were the front line during the civil wars. Both the CPA in 2005, and the referendum for the South independence in January 2011 included provisions for determining the future of each one of the three areas, but failure to agree on important aspects of the vote led to the cancellation of the vote. In Abyei, grievances regarding, grazing rights, land and oil are exceeded by the conflict between the Misseriya tribe and the Dinka, the vast majority in Abyei. The Misseriya are Arab nomads who migrate into Abyei for a few months each year. In light of the upcoming referendum for the future of the area, the Misseriya feared that if Abyei were included in the South they would lose crucial grazing rights, and Khartoum insisted that they be allowed to vote in any referendum.

On the other hand, South Sudan believed that only the permanent residents of Abyei, predominantly the Dinka tribe, should be allowed to vote. South Kordofan and Blue Nile states are home primarily to the Nuba tribe, who associate themselves with South Sudan and fought the Sudanese government during the civil wars, but who today are part of the North. When the North ordered all former Nuba fighters to give up their weapons, fighting erupted, leading to thousands of civilian deaths and the declaration of a state of emergency measure, causing roughly 100,000 people to flee the zone. Outside of these areas, recognized for their fractious dynamics, there are many regions where tensions between North and South can rise in the future, along the length of the North-South boundary line: the Melut basin in Upper Nile is likely to become more contested, as oil production increases, and agricultural schemes and precious fertile land represent high stakes in Upper Nile, White Nile, and Blue Nile. Aside from oil resources, there are other valuable resources that could constitute grounds for contestation: copper and uranium in Western Bahr El Ghazal and South Darfur, gold in Mabaan and Kurmuk and also grazing rights that could lead to serious unrest in Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Unity state.

Debt sharing

The Sudanese government currently has a nearly 38 billion dollars sovereign debt. Historically, when debt is divided like this, each new country share has been determined by where the original money flowing from each loan has been spent. Under this scenario, the North would take on most of the debt while the South, very little. However, this scenario may not be palatable for the North, since it would leave the North with an

almost crippling debt ratio that will be difficult to manage, particularly if the South keeps hold of most of the oil revenues. Yet, the South can argue that there is very little justification for it to take on the debt, since few of the loans were to the benefit of that area of Sudan.

Oil revenue sharing

The discovery of oil in the '70s added a powerful economic dimension to the North-South divide. In order to control the production of oil, President Nimeiri adopted a two-pronged strategy which included division and displacement of the population in the oilfields. Those who had lived for generations on the land were robbed of their homes, animals, crops, families, and often their lives.

Daniel Litvin, director of Critical Resource, a British consulting firm specialised in natural resources, was 100% right when he said in an interview for France 24 that „the oil issue is the catalyst for this very old and complex conflict". Ever since South Sudan gained independence in July 2011, the North and South have been facing off over how to divide the oil revenue. Although Sudan was a small player on the global oil stage, oil was and still is today the dominant factor in the domestic and international politics of North and South, since it was first discovered in the late '70s. The discovery and exploitation of major oil deposits in 1999 encouraged the militarily orientation of the regime and dramatically raised the stakes of the war. As most of the oil fields lie in the South, the government conducted a massive military mobilization to secure these fields. The unrest in the past months confirms once again the importance of this resource for the two countries, and the effects it has on their actions and strategic planning. Oil wealth contributed to the second phase of Sudan's civil wars; the sharing of oil revenue was a key component of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and it was again brought into discussion with the split of the country in July 2011.

Oil production began in the late '90s and grew rapidly with the completion of the largest export pipeline that runs from central Sudan to the Port of Sudan in July 1999 – the Greater Nile Oil Pipeline, which travels 1,600 km from the Unity oil field to Port Sudan on the Red Sea via Khartoum. The second largest oil pipeline in the country is the PetroDar pipeline, which extends 1,380 kilometers from the Palogue oil field in the Melut Basin to Port Sudan. The agreement granting independence to the South stipulated that both South and North would receive 50% of the revenues. But neither the South, home to 75% of the two countries oil fields and responsible for the majority of daily oil production, nor the North, which controls the refineries and oversees exportation, are satisfied, even with the international practice which usually encourages the 50:50 revenues division for 10 or 15 years after the split, due to the set-up costs before the split.

Sudan's government is under pressure to overcome a severe economic crisis after losing the Southern oil, which made up 90% of the country's exports, with a generated 5 billion

dollars in oil revenues in 2010. The North is demanding 1 billion dollars for unpaid transit fees since the split in July, plus 36 dollars/barrel as a future transit fee, roughly a third of the export value of Southern oil. Henry Hall, Africa specialist for Critical Resource, told France 24 that „the main problem is that South Sudan thinks, rightly or wrongly, that the North is imposing exorbitant taxes for use of its pipeline". The demands did not come close to what the South expected out of a proper deal, because Juba was aiming to pay around 1-6 dollars per barrel, so a compromise was nowhere in sight, not to mention that Juba was searching for new ways to export oil which will not imply the North infrastructure. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Republic of South Sudan and Kenya to build an oil pipeline from South Sudan to Port of Lamu in Kenya. South Sudan wants the planned pipeline to be just over 1,000-miles long, with a capacity of 500,000 bbl/d, and completed within 18 months, but industry analysts say such a pipeline would usually take at least three years to build and cost up to 4 billion dollars. A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed in February 2012 to build an oil pipeline through Ethiopia to the port of Djibouti.

Land is also a central issue to this oil problem in Sudan. It is a source of basic survival, as well as a source of individual and tribal pride. However, all the national governments have viewed land as a state asset and, due to the historical imbalance between the centre and the periphery, it has been possible for them to lay successful claims to the lands of the rural communities. The government's policies of land expropriation for heavy investment in mechanized schemes and oil areas took place in the name of development, but had devastating consequences for the pastoral population in the affected areas, in places like Renk in Northern Upper Nile, Unity state in Western Upper Nile region and the Nuba Mountains (International Crisis Group, 2010). The scorched earth tactics used by the North against the people who where traditionally using the land has also served the dual purpose of gaining control over farming and grazing land and creating large-scale population displacement. The loss of land to the oil industry and mechanized schemes is one of the injustices felt strongly by many people in some areas of the periphery, and is a key source of motivation for joining armed groups in fighting the government and allied militias.

Proliferation of small arms

The long-term civil war led to a proliferation of small arms among the civilian population and produced a multitude of armed groups formed in most cases along ethnic and tribal lines. According to Maj. Gen. Daniel Deng Lual, chairperson of the Southern Sudan Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control, between 400,000 and 700,000 small arms are believed to be held by civilians in Southern Sudan.

Small arms sale is a lucrative business and South Sudan is an attractive market. There are many reasons why the communities would like to buy and keep weapons. The

underlying cause of owning arms is protection. The communities feel they are not protected by the state; therefore, they are taking the law in their own hands. Among the rural population, there is little willingness to give up weapons in the absence of major improvements in the security sector. Ethnic or tribal militias continue to exist in many areas; armed conflicts over property, land, and water rights are widespread. The civil war and the formation of militias have politicized ethnic and tribal identities in a process exacerbated by ongoing conflict and the by ease of access to small arms. Rivalries and vendettas between these groups have become a source of conflict in their own right.

Triggers

Sudan's independence

When North and South Sudan were merged in 1946, the majority of political and administrative power was allocated to the North, leaving many in the South resentful. This act was done without previous consultation with Southerners, who feared they were going to be subsumed by the political power of the larger North. After the February 1953 agreement by the United Kingdom and Egypt to grant independence to Sudan, the internal tensions over the nature of the relationship of North to South were heightened. In the lead up to independence, in 1956, the South initiated a rebellion motivated by fears of further marginalization, especially because Northern leaders were backing away from commitments to create a federal government that would give the South substantial autonomy.

Violation of the Addis Ababa agreement

The first violations occurred when President Nimeiry attempted to take control of oil fields straddling the North-South border, once major oil reserves were discovered in Bentiu in 1978, in Southern Kurdufan and Upper Blue Nile in 1979, the Unity oilfields in 1980, Adar oilfields in 1981, and in Heglig in 1982. Access to the oil fields meant significant economic benefit to whoever controlled them. During the '80s, political instability in South Sudan increased. Motivated, at least partly, by a desire to shore up his popularity in the largely Muslim North, president Nimeiry instituted the strict Islamic law (Sharia) in all Sudan, further inflaming opposition in the Christian and Animist South.

CPA (2005) and the referendum for the South independence

In spite of its obvious strengths of offering unprecedented opportunities for the Sudanese people to attain a lasting peace, the CPA also has several weaknesses, which must be resolved in order to achieve the long awaited goal. The most important strong point is that the CPA brought an end to the war, offering an opportunity to re-draw the power structure and achieve the much sought peace, justice and sustainable development. The

agreement attempted to deal with the root causes of the conflict, especially those related to the system of governance by ensuring the right of self-determination for the South. By agreement on equitable sharing of power and wealth, the CPA has been a catalyst in encouraging other marginalized regions to intensify their armed struggle to achieve their long denied rights. On the other hand, the most important CPA weakness is that it leaves all the doors and windows wide open for a power struggle, not only between the two signatories, but also among all the political factions all over the country, possibly by a polarization along an Arab – Islamic axis as opposed to a national – secular one. As the CPA was mainly an accord between the two parties at war, it neither considered other actors in the political sphere, nor attempted to deal with all the major issues in the special areas at the border. Very few people in North Sudan, as yet, feel that the CPA is really owned by the Sudanese nation as a whole because it mainly addresses the issues pertaining to South Sudan, with little, if any, reference to those of North Sudan (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

The vote, however, failed to address many issues which remain unresolved even today. Border demarcation is particularly problematic, as 20% of the new border has not yet been agreed upon. Tens of thousands of refugees have fled conflict areas, and post-independence citizenship complications have become a major issue with an estimated 2 million South Sudanese living in the North. Moreover, the logistics of splitting oil revenues and the 38 billion dollars national debt have yet to be worked out.

The "Three Areas" – the key for a lasting peace?

The headline of this new conflict between North and South is the Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan areas (collectively known as the "Three Areas"- including here also the Unity State); Abyei is an oil-producing region claimed by both North and South, and South Kordofan and Blue Nile were the front line during the civil wars. What is so special about this zone is the fact that each one of the three areas has their own tense local realities besides the general inter-state conflict drivers, much of them being linked with the intra and inter-tribal local problems about land, resources, and citizenship. This situation makes peace a lot more difficult than the other areas, and both the CPA in 2005, and the referendum for the South independence in January 2011 included provisions for determining the future of each one of the three areas, but failure to agree on important aspects of the vote led to the cancellation of the latter.

Abyei

Abyei is located between Bahr al Ghazal, Warrap, and Southern Kordofan States. The area consists of a network of streams which flow into the Bahr al Arab River in Unity State. The Bahr al Arab also flows across the south of the area. Abyei has traditionally been inhabited by agro-pastoralist Ngok Dinka who have returned to the area following

massive displacement during the years of the civil war. It also hosts a number of migration routes for nomadic groups, most notably the Humr section of the Misseriya, who spend up to eight months a year within the territory of Abyei. Dinka Ngok also migrated northwards to a shared rights zone. The discovery of oil in 1979 increased the strategic importance of Abyei and soon after that national politics met with local disputes to further entrench divides between the communities along North-South lines. The leading role of Ngok Dinka in the formation and leadership of the SPLA also gives the area additional symbolic importance.

The dispute over the Abyei region is the most volatile aspect of Sudan's 2005 CPA. The CPA granted the disputed territory, which has a significant percentage of Sudan's oil reserves, a special administrative status and a referendum in 2011 to decide whether to join the independent South. Failure to agree on important aspects of the vote and the high stake of oil, border demarcation and citizenship transformed the referendum in an endless discussion which is still ongoing even today, more than a year and a half from its initial date. On May 20-21, 2011, the SAF invaded Abyei, displacing an estimated 100,000 people, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Among the displaced are an estimated 3,800 children. The invasion of Abyei seems to have been premeditated, according to Sudanese and regional sources. The Sudanese Armed Forces have been building up their military presence in the Abyei region since January 2011. The government of Sudan claimed that they attacked Abyei in order to restore law and order, but a day after the invasion, pro-government militias and government forces were seen looting and burning, according to United Nations and South Sudanese officials. The 2011 SAF attack on Abyei is not the first since the signing of the CPA in 2005. In May 2008, government forces attacked Abyei and burned the town. In February-March 2011, a number of villages near Abyei were attacked by government forces and their allies. Over the past several years, a number of agreements have been reached between the parties to defuse tensions and resolve the status of Abyei. However, most of these agreements have not been implemented, as is the case of this late September summit between the two leaders of Sudan and South Sudan.

The crisis in Abyei consists of several separate – but interlinked – conflict types: communal conflicts, local-elite conflicts, centre-periphery conflicts and cross-border conflicts. In Abyei, grievances regarding land, grazing rights and oil between the two Sudans are exceeded by the conflict between the Misseriya tribe and the Dinka tribe, the vast majority in Abyei. Pastoralists from the Misseriya ethnic group, living most of the year in Kordofan (Sudan), traditionally travel southward through the Abyei region in the dry season to find water for their cattle. Their annual migration in search for pastures to graze their cattle takes place along three main livestock routes: the western corridor, which ends in Bahr el Ghazal; the central corridor which historically passed through Abyei and into Warrap State; and the eastern corridor passing through Heglig

and ending in Unity State. During the second civil war, large numbers of Misseriya were armed and deployed as militias to counter the South's insurgency (Crisis Group Africa, 2007). As the backbone of the Popular Defense Forces (PDF), they were involved in numerous attacks against communities suspected of supporting the SPLA.

Controversies often arise when they encounter the local Dinka Ngok pastoralists, whose livelihood also depends on their cattle, which they venerate in cultural practices (the number of cattle also means a certain social status – a higher number means a higher status and more power). The Misseriya-Dinka Ngok conflict follows a habitual pattern, as Sudan's communal conflicts are often fought over different subsistence resources needed for a particular group's main livelihood. Essential for Sudan's communal conflicts is land. Land is crucial for livelihood, as it provides resources for both agriculturalists and pastoralists. Also, land is important for political recognition, as groups with their own land are credited with more influence than landless groups. For this reason, landless groups continuously struggle to attain land. These groups are among Sudan's poorest and most marginalized, and their aspiration for land has been used by the government to recruit militias under promises of access to land. However, the promises are repeatedly unmet and these groups remain marginalized, generating more tension in an already inflamed zone. In the light of the referendum for the future of the zone, the Misseriya feared that if Abyei were included in the South they would lose crucial traditional grazing rights and Khartoum insisted that they be allowed to vote in any referendum, a natural position, we may say, because Misseriya fought in large numbers with the Government of Sudan during the second civil war. On the other hand, South Sudan believed that only the permanent residents of Abyei, predominantly the Dinka tribe, should be allowed to vote – a natural position, we may say again, because the Dinka tribe fought alongside with the South during the two civil wars. The President of Southern Sudan has repeatedly assured border communities that migration rights will be respected before and after the referendum. The CPA and the PCA ruling also enshrine land usage rights for migration in the area. But for the Misseriya those are just words, and history agrees with them. They have twice experienced borders governed by a southern regional government. The first following the Addis Ababa Accord and the second came after the signing of the CPA. In the first case, these challenges manifested themselves through clashes with southern police forces. In the second, time restrictions, requirements to disarm, and taxes led to clashes with SPLA at the Unity and Warrap State borders. The CPA increased the Misseriya's insecurity and financial vulnerability (Crisis Group Africa, 2007; Concordis International Sudan Report, 2010). In the context of extremely high illiteracy, unemployment rates, and feelings of marginalization, their discontent has taken various forms, including armed resistance. These concerns are a source of instability around which mobilization can continue to occur. In the absence of negotiated migratory arrangements and implementation of a North-South security pact, there remains considerable uncertainty what the coming seasons will hold. The

migration season will begin again in November, in less than a month, and the Misseriya cattle herders would normally reach the Abyei and Unity border by the end of the year. Whether or not they come and what they will encounter remains to be seen.

The Abyei struggle also includes an element of local elite conflict. Although constituting two separate countries, neither Sudan nor South Sudan should be seen as solid units. Likewise, the local actors involved in the Abyei struggle are not cohesive. Instead, various elites within both countries – and elites within the Abyei region – struggle over influence within the region and within the communities. Local elite conflicts can be between politicians, traditional leaders, and young emerging leaders, or between leaders of different rebel factions (Brosché, *2012)*. A substantial part of the top-level leadership in South Sudan's dominant political party – and former rebels – the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) are from the Abyei area. For them, a South Sudan without Abyei is inconceivable. However, other Southern-based elites from localities outside of Abyei take a more pragmatic view and argue that Abyei should neither stand in the way of independence, nor serve as a source of war. Thus, among the South Sudanese, there are divergent views on the importance of Abyei, which have an impact on the dynamics among the local elite.

The Abyei crisis is also an example of the third conflict type: centre-periphery conflicts. Abyei is a marginalized peripheral area compared to the centre, Khartoum, and its surroundings. Although Abyei is economically important with its oil-resources, the area remains poor. The fact that Abyei is underdeveloped despite its economic and political importance has led to frustration among the local population. Despite the fact that the SPLM/A fought against the regime in Khartoum to change Sudan's regional imbalances, a similar centre-periphery dimension has developed in South Sudan (Brosché, 2012). In this newest state in the world, Juba is the political and economic centre, while other areas of South Sudan are severely marginalized. Peace dividends in South Sudan have primarily been allocated to Juba, while other regions have been disregarded. In some areas the population is even worse off now than during the war, as humanitarian assistance during the war has not been substituted by other services. As of July 9th, the Abyei conflict also involves a cross-border conflict dimension, with the two capitals of Juba and Khartoum competing over control of Abyei.

Oil plays a key role in the dispute. After 1999, Sudan's production took off and by 2003, more than one quarter of Sudan's oil production was coming from Abyei. Since then, production at most of the fields in the concession has begun to decline, including all the fields within Abyei. Abyei's relative importance to Sudan's oil sector has also declined. From over a quarter of all oil production in 2003, it will likely be less than 5-10% in by 2015, if the international economists' predictions are right (the same specialists say that South Sudan will face declining oil production from 2015 and that without additional discoveries the oil is likely to run out in 20 to 30 years). Some people argue

that if Abyei's remaining oil reserves are likely to be very small by 2015 relative to other Sudanese reserves, Abyei may become a lower stake between Khartoum and Juba. We think this is a hazardous opinion because, regardless of the oil production, Abyei will remain important because of its pipeline infrastructure – another important driver of the conflict, with a high stake for both states.

South Kordofan/Unity

Although ceasefire has been reached in Abyei, another conflict escalated in the other two zones, South Kordofan/Unity and Blue Nile. The South Kordofan and Blue Nile states are home primarily to the Nuba tribe who associate themselves with South Sudan and fought the Sudanese government during the civil wars, but who today are part of the North. When the North ordered all former Nuba fighters to give up their weapons, fighting erupted, leading to thousands of civilian deaths and the declaration of a state of emergency measure, causing roughly 100,000 people to flee the zone.

This complex conflict covers the borderlands between Unity State, Heglig, and the Central and Eastern side of Abyei Area and southern localities of Southern Kordofan. The southern borderlands are home to Nuer groups in the South and West, and Dinka Panarou in the North of the State, both nomadic agro-pastoralists. The whole region is spanned by numerous nomadic migration corridors by which Misseriya sections have historically moved southwards for grazing and water during the dry season. Dinka Ngok also move north of the Abyei Area from time to time in order to seek water and grazing. Located in the very centre of Sudan's North-South axis, the region accounts for 80% of Sudan's oil production. The discovery of the Bentiu oil fields in the early 1970's led to serious tensions between Northern and Southern elites and ultimately contributed to the collapse of the Addis Ababa Accord. The Heglig area witnessed intense fighting and displacement during the second civil war, especially after oil export began in 1999, but also in April this year.

Inadequate implementation of the CPA's special protocol related to the region has led to insecurity. The state's inhabitants were mobilized by the opposing sides during the North-South war and, despite the CPA, they remain deeply scarred by that conflict, polarized and fragmented along political and tribal lines. They are armed and organized and feel increasingly abandoned by their former „patrons", who have not fulfilled their promises to provide peace dividends. The return of displaced persons (IDPs), development projects, and creation of an integrated state government administration, have all stalled, and hundreds of people have died in disputes over land and grazing rights, with no comprehensive or sustainable local or national response.

Given its history, resources, ethno-political significance, and location – both strategic and isolated – Unity state is today a territory of unique importance and complexity. Unity state lies in the north-central part of South Sudan. It borders Southern Kordofan

and Abyei to the north, as well as the Warrap, Lakes, Upper Nile and Jonglei states to the south. Its northern border accounts for some 270 km of the boundary separating Sudan and South Sudan. Unity is a predominantly a Nuer homeland. Its northernmost counties are also home to sections of the Dinka tribe, though they number far fewer than the Nuer (according to the 2008 Population and Housing Census). Another problem of the Unity State is migration. Historically, Misseriya nomads also use parts of the territory to graze large herds of cattle, though traditional migration practices were complicated during the war and have been in a tense status for several seasons. Conflict over access to water and grazing are not new to the region. Host communities and pastoral groups have for a century accused each other of conducting raids and counter-raids during the periods of migration. Cattle raiding and associated conflicts have been a part of agro-pastoralist life for generations. But the nature and scope of the raiding has changed, becoming more violent and a source of considerable concern to communities along much of Unity state's western border (Jeffrey Gettleman wrote in 2010 an article for the Foreign Policy, "Africa's Forever Wars", where he stated that the modern way of fighting a civil – war in Africa is not the traditional one, being more cowardly – instead fighting with guns the combatants rape women and steal other people's children). Many of Unity's southern communities feel marginalized by their state capital, left exposed to unchecked criminality and cattle-related conflict with the neighboring Dinka. Infrastructure, roads and state presence (administrative, security, and judicial) are limited across much of the state; these are deficits that permit the ongoing cattle raiding.

The Unity state is home to a significant portion of South Sudan's proven oil reserves. Its subterranean resources and those from the neighboring Upper Nile state have fuelled the national economy and generated additional income for the state (most productive and most lucrative during the CPA period). However, its citizens remain undecided to its net effect, as tangible development gains are still lacking (the CPA gave 2% from the oil revenues back to the community, but only on paper), allegations of corruption are widespread, and the social and environmental consequences of extraction persist. Misseriya report that oil industry-related construction has caused desertification around Lake Keilak – one of the largest bodies of water in Southern Kordofan, and has turned into a local-level competition place for the Nuer, Dinka and the Misseriya nomads. Community leaders said that herders have been forced to move further South in search of water and grazing and that this has intensified competition over resources in Unity State. Officials in Pariang County also said that chemical contamination related to oil industry activities has damaged grasslands in Heglig area and Pariang County, with similar consequences. But all of those problems would be more relaxed without the proliferation of small-arms in the area. Disarmament of nomads before they enter Unity State has been a bottom-line position for southerners in negotiations with Misseriya over seasonal migration. Unity State authorities say that civilian populations in their areas have been disarmed and that they are determined to also disarm Misseriya who

enter the area. Misseriya contest the scale of southern disarmament and stress that they still need weapons to protect themselves against cattle raiding, banditry, and community conflict. They complain that they pay taxation and grazing fees to Unity State authorities for use of traditional grazing areas and do not receive protection in return. The Misseriya put the main causes of tensions around arms proliferation down to the presence of non-demobilized troops, who still possess firearms, and off-duty SPLA. On the other hand, Nuer and Dinka suspect that Misseriya groups are being armed, or are hosting PDF/SAF components, at the request of northern political forces who have an interest in destabilizing the peace in the area (International Crisis Group, 2011).

Finally, the present-day Unity state is among the areas that suffered the worst of the last 22 years of conflict, mostly due to the strategic value of its oil fields, translated in the difficulty of a proper border demarcation. The border is contested by national and community actors as oil interests intersect with the local historical claims to land ownership and usage presented in the past rows. Heglig became the most significant contested border area, owing all to its reserves, oil infrastructure, and lack of clarity in the border demarcation process after it was placed outside the Abyei area by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in July 2009. For the South this was a big problem because it automatically placed the Heglig oil fields in Southern Kordofan, meaning that the GoSS would no longer be entitled to a share in the oil revenues. The militarization of Heglig by national armies combined with fiercely local contestation and grievances over land are of serious concern, also keeping in mind the presence of incompatible beliefs, the availability of weapons, weak institutions, and OAGs and armed forces in close proximity.

Another hot-point in the area is Southern Kordofan. This area hosts a diverse population of an estimated 2.2 million people who speak over 50 different languages and adhere to Islamic, Christian, and traditional faiths. The Nuba, mostly sedentary farmers inhabiting the central plateau of the Nuba Mountains, form the largest part of the Southern Kordofan population. They comprise more than 50 different ethnic groups who do not share one particular culture, tradition, language or religion. Rather, what unifies them is their perception of a common history and shared identity: they widely recognize themselves to be Nuba. At the time of their independence, the Nuba did not question their status as „northerners", nor did they collectively sympathize with Southern Sudan's repeated call for an independent state, though similar long-term perceptions of economic and political marginalization were, and still are, present. Their alignment with the SPLA can be traced back to the early 1980s, when the Khartoum government ordered attacks on Nuba villages suspected of supporting the South's insurgency. Accumulated grievances run deep in the collective memory. Nuba populations have been subject to displacement policies under the pretext of modernization, their land expropriated for national development projects and their culture targeted for homogenization. In the

early 1990s, the Nuba took up arms and joined the SPLM to resist marginalization. Simultaneously, successive Khartoum governments co-opted the Misseriya and other Arab tribes, to maintain a buffer zone intended to protect Northern Sudan and the oil fields adjacent to their homelands from the rebellion and to fight proxy wars against their African neighbors. The CPA's integration of Misseriya into Southern Kordofan aggravated Nuba grievances, given that this reduced their numerical dominance.

Southern Kordofan was severely affected by the civil wars because of its strategic, economic and social importance. The State is part of Northern Sudan, and the CPA was enlarged with the annexation of Western Kordofan. By reducing their political dominance, these two developments aggravated the Nuba and Misseriya respectively and increased competition for land. Today the main drivers of conflict are related to land and farmer-pastoralist tensions, the presence of major oilfields and the significance of the border, political marginalization of the Nuba and Misseriya groups, integration in the state administration of the former SPLA. The land-related causes of conflict today include contestations over land ownership, conflicting livelihoods, increase in livestock populations and oil compensation. Unemployment rates, particularly among youth, are high and access to basic services like clean drinking water, health care and educational facilities remain limited.

Blue Nile

The last of the three special areas is Blue Nile. The borderland between Upper Nile, White Nile and Blue Nile States includes rich agricultural land (gum Acacia and cotton), grazing pastures, and natural resources (minerals and oil). Upper Nile State is predominantly home to Shilluk, Dinka, Mabaan (mainly a Muslim population based in one county bordering Blue Nile State), and Nuer. Nuer and Dinka are pastoralists whilst Mabaan and Shilluk rely on hunting and sedentary farming.

Migration into Upper Nile State from Kordofan, Sennar, White Nile, and Blue Nile is a relatively peaceful process. Upper Nile and White Nile communities share common cultural traits developed through a century of shared administration. Blue Nile State was considered a key test for peace in the borderlands and the unity of Sudan because it has been relatively stable compared to the other transitional areas and the Upper Nile State. But the major problems are also present in this area, maybe not like the case of Abyei, but their presence is a continuous driver for the instability of the zone. The rights of farmers, cattle owning nomads, and the environmental impact of mechanized agriculture were not considered by policy-makers and investors. Tribal chiefs did not feel they were consulted, compensation was not offered to those affected, and livelihood opportunities were reduced as jobs went to Egyptians or laborers from the North, with locals often only employed as cheap, seasonal labor. The expansion of farming, combined with the historical development of the war, has put pressure on land use,

hardened divisions between communities and increased tensions between pastoralists and sedentary farmers. Disputes tend to occur away from densely populated areas, where migration routes pass near mechanized farms, in particular in the northern part of the State. Farmers claim that they suffer crop losses owing to destruction by animals and accidental fires; nomads in return claim to have lost key grazing areas. The presence of weapons is widespread among communities today. This adds to the risk of significant conflict in any disputes between nomads and farming communities during the dry season. The situation is further exacerbated by the increase in herd sizes over recent years. In conclusion, border demarcation and the CPA are reinforcing conflict drivers by hardening attitudes on both sides and creating an apparent zero-sum game at every level with respect to access to resources.

The interaction of conflict drivers represents a significant and increasing threat to stability along the border. Heavily militarized national conflicts over resources combines with frustrated, organized, and armed communities, to generate an unstable system providing numerous access points for exploitation (Johnson, 2006). Last month the two leaders of both Sudans signed a host of agreements on border security, economic and citizenship issues in order to resolve their long-lasting disputes over border demarcation, oil share revenues, and citizenship. It is a big step but let's not forget two things: history and the local realities presented in the past rows. The first shows us that all the previous agreements between the two Sudans were not respected, the last episode being almost two months ago when the same two leaders gave the big news that the borders were open and the oil transit fees no longer represented a problem (both issues were on this September summit agenda again). The second is a more complex problem, being almost another conflict inside the one we already know and it seems the two leaders forgot about it. It is about local realities, traditions and historical conflict between historical tribes, a reality which should be a top priority for both states. In the end, the problems between the two Sudans can be resolved, as they are dependent one from the other, but the tension inside this special areas represents a real driver for a possible future conflict and these next opinions and citations conclude for us: „Abyei is the Kashmir of Sudan" (*Brosché, 2012)*, „Southern Kardofan is the new Darfur", „*Heglig will be the Kashmir of Sudan" (*Unity State Peace Commissioner, 2010)*, or „*the Abyei people are not alone. They may take up arms. Their people in the SPLM, SPLA may defect and go and join them. And suddenly, the northern army will also come in, and what will happen is that in a short time, within a few days, Sudan is back to war"* *(*Chief Administrator Arop Kuol).

Future developments

In light of all facts presented in this article, the international community said that a new major conflict in the area is almost imminent. From our point of view, the prospect of a major war between the two countries is very questionable due to the mutual dependence

of the two countries in terms of oil. Both countries know that their only solid chance for economical development is oil, which can only be optimally exploited through collaboration between them. Another argument for the slim chances of a new armed conflict between the two countries is the situation of South Sudan in terms of internal challenges, some of them more important than the root causes of this new conflict, and the international community, which can be a decisive factor in the management of the current conflict; these topics will be addressed in our next article.

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