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Contents

THE BAKASSI CRISIS:
THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN
AND CAMEROONIAN MILITARY,
1981-2013

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Abstract. *This paper examines the role played by the Nigerian and Cameroonian military in exacerbating and/or mitigating the crisis over ownership of the Bakassi peninsula prior to and after the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague in 2002. Faced with internal challenges and determined to keep Bakassi to either side, the military of both countries committed atrocities, while lives and properties were also lost in the process. The same military also contributed to the peaceful transfer of the entire oil and fish rich peninsula to the Republic of Cameroon. From 1981, when the first conflict was recorded in the peninsula, between the Cameroonian and Nigerian forces, to 2008, when the final transfer of the territory to Cameroon was done, and after, there was sustained tension between the forces of both countries for different reasons. Their role was also compounded by the militant activities of armed groups from the Nigerian side, determined to keep the territory under Nigeria. This paper reveals, through a content analysis of some of the literature available, that both the Nigerian and Cameroonian military carried out their activities in the Bakassi peninsula determined by internal and external forces.*

Keywords*: Bakassi, Nigeria, Cameroon, military, crisis.*

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Introduction

Africa is a continent of both peace and conflicts – both internal and external. Several countries have experienced these conflicts within their borders and this has impacted the foundation established at their independence. In many of these internal conflicts, the military has been embroiled for or against the state and the population. Among countries that have been and are still riddled with internal problems with the military playing a decisive role are Nigeria,

Sierra Leone, Liberia, Uganda, Malawi, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia, Angola, Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Republic of Congo (Tvedten, 1989; Bongartz, 1991; Bigombe, 1993; Weiss, 2000; Abdullah, 2004; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004; Agbu, 2004; Akindes, 2004; Chirambo, 2004; Kirwin, 2006; Tar, 2006; Conteh-Morgan, 2006; Courson, 2009; Bere, 2011; Obuoforibo, 2011; Otite, 2011; Ibaba, 2011; Bamidele, 2012; Lindberg, 2012-2013). These conflicts have often involved the military either fighting against itself as is the case in South Sudan, barely two years after independence, and the Central African Republic (CAR), a state that has known instability since its independence.

While the political crisis in South Sudan, which began in December 2013, was a result of the struggle for leadership of the country between Riek Machar, the sacked Vice President, and Salva Kiir, the incumbent president, leading to the polarisation of the military, the situation in the CAR is even worse. There is a group of disgruntled soldiers and other armed groups who toppled a government and took over leadership of the country. In 2010, Cote d'Ivoire was also buried in an internal crisis over contested election results between the president Alassane Dramani Ouatarra and former president Laurent Gbagbo. Other countries, like Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Uganda, and Mali, have invested huge resources for their military to handle the insurgency – people were seeking to overthrow the government and take over the mantle of leadership. The role of the military with regards to the integrity of the state has been outstanding and needs to be appreciated.

Apart from intra-state conflicts, there are conflicts of an inter-state nature. Some of these conflicts are generated from one country and spread to other countries. Others erupt due to a boundary dispute between neighbouring countries. These boundaries are a product of European scramble and partition of Africa. Examples of conflicts which spread beyond national borders include the *Boko Haram* and *Ansaru* insurgency in Nigeria and neighbouring countries, the *Janjaweed* atrocities in Sudan and neighbours, *Al- Shabaab* militant activities in Sudan and East Africa, insurgency of the Lords' Resistance Army in Uganda and other countries in the region, AQIM in Mali, and the M23 in the DRC (Vehnämäki, 2002; Fawole and Ukeje, 2005; Hendricks and Lushaba, 2005; Salih, 2011; Meyer, 2011; Nkwi, 2013; Onuoha, 2013; Okereke, 2013). In these conflicts, the militaryhave been involved to supress them, to protect national borders and assist civilian victims.

There have also been border disputes in some African countries, which lasted for many years. Some of the conflicts which lasted for many years were those between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which culminated in the independence of Eritrea. Botswana and Namibia also went to war over their border between 1984 and 1999. Similarly, Chad and Libya were at war over their border between 1972 and 1994, and Cameroon and Nigeria clashed several times with casualties on both sides over the Bakassi peninsula, between

1981 and 2008 (Pacific Settlement of Border Disputes, 2008). In all these border conflicts, the patience of the military was tested with some of them paying the supreme price, added to the loss of other lives and property.

In many of these conflicts, attention was focused on the leaders of the countries involved. The role of the military was either relegated to the background, or treated as footnotes in conflicts and conflict resolution. When mention has been made of the role of the military, it has often been to castigate them for fuelling the conflict. In spite of the role the military have played in exacerbating conflicts, they have also played other important functions for their country. For example, they have been involved in intelligence gathering, support for victims, and in the application of decisions taken by their leaders. The information collected has often assisted leaders in taking decisions by reducing conflict or intensifying them.

Rather than relegating it to the background, this paper examines the pivotal role of the Nigerian and Cameroonian military during the Bakassi crisis between 1981 and 2013. The paper then gives credence to the role of the military of both countries beginning with the refusal by the military governments of Nigeria from the mid 1970s to recognise the borders between Cameroon and Nigeria as agreed upon by President Ahmadou Ahidjo and Yakubu Gowon during the Maroua Accord of 1975. In the Bakassi conflict the military of both countries defended the position of their respective countries, protected their citizens in the peninsula and offered assistance to those who were exposed during the battles. In addition, the military respected the ICJ ruling which called on Nigerian troops to withdraw from the Bakassi peninsula. Cameroonian forces were warned to exercise restraint throughout the period of transfer of authority to Cameroon of Bakassi. This rule was, however, broken from time to time. The insurgency of armed groups outside the state apparatus in Bakassi were and are still being monitored thanks to the presence of the military in this region. The deliberate undermining of the causes of the skirmishes and casualties was also common on both sides. This was a military strategy and was certainly intended to control the anger of the population of both countries. The extent to which the military of both countries achieved this is a subject of further research. It also took the professionalism and commitment of Nigerian forces to respect the timetable set for their withdrawal in the Bakassi peninsula.

Conflicts and Military Involvement

The military have been at the centre of trying to bring the array of conflicts in Africa to an end. Their involvement in intra or inter-state conflicts has either compounded or lessened the problems. In fact, the military are involved in the politics of its country directly or indirectly (Leon, 2009) at all times, and this involvement influences the approach of the leadership to political issues and in the management of conflicts. A lot has been written conceptualising the romance between the military and conflicts all

over the world. In this study, our focus is on those concepts or theories that help us to understand the complexity of the Bakassi conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria and the role that the military of both countries played in this conflict.

Mehler (2004: 539-44) conceptualises violence in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of oligopolies. To this author, oligopolies comprise a fluctuating number of partly competing, and partly cooperating, actors of violence of different quality. In oligopolies of violence, governance is based on a mixture of real repression and permanent readiness to negotiate. In territorial oligopolies, agents of violence may find relatively stable arrangements to attribute zones of control inside states and exert a monopoly of violence there. With regards to the oligopoly of violence, there is the distribution of means of violence to a limited number of perpetrators. There is relevance of the concept of oligopolies of violence to the conduct of the Bakassi conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria. In the peninsula there were and are still groups competing for control and exclusion of the other. Apart from the Cameroon and Nigerian military presence in the area, other armed militant groups have tried to carve out spheres of influence for themselves to the exclusion of the Nigerian and Cameroonian military. The unwillingness of these competing groups to sue for peace or dialogue with the other is what Mateos (2010: 25) describes as primordialist views in conflict situations.

Another set of theories which seem to relate to the reality in the conflict over Bakassi are those of realism, liberalism, and elite interests, as discussed by Lieberfeld (2005: 3-7) in trying to unravel the basis of the American involvement in the Iraq war, one of the most costly for that country after the Vietnam War. Realism relates to those aspects of foreign policy of a country that remain consistent over time. The concept places an emphasis on continuity and also the inevitability of military competition. Leaders opt for war when they believe it necessary for national security. Lieberfeld also examines the concept of liberalism where the decision to go to war is based on the internal characteristics of a country particularly the type of government in place and also on international law. Again he examines the concept of elite interests in conflicts. Elite interests get centre stage when the actions of the political and economic elites affect the decisions involving the military and war. This is a Marxist perspective which argues that external wars are fomented by the bourgeoisie to control new markets. This is also to protect its class dominance by deflecting socio-economic pressures from the workers.

In the three concepts proposed by Lieberfeld, one can establish a link with the crisis that erupted over the Bakassi peninsula between Cameroon and Nigeria. Cameroon's policy on the border demarcation with Nigeria has remained consistent from the presidency of Ahmadou Ahidjo to that of Paul Biya. In meetings and agreements with the Nigerian leadership, Cameroon's position was always clear, that is, Bakassi was Cameroonian territory. Even when the military regimes of Nigeria tried to claim Bakassi as Nigeria's territory, this did not stop the Cameroon government from holding tight to the position

taken when it gained its independence and reunification. Nigeria, on the other hand, was not consistent until convinced to accept the verdict of the ICJ in 2002. This is however still being questioned by some political elite in Nigeria, partly to keep their interest and divert public attention from the vexing problem of the *Boko Haram* insurgency which is trying to undermine the authority of the state and other socio-religious conflicts in the country. Cameroon was also involved in military conflicts in the Bakassi peninsula to placate Anglophones who are disgruntled with the state of the union. These concepts notwithstanding, a particular methodology was used to analyse the issues involved in this study.

Methodology of Study

In this paper, the methodology of content analysis of works on or related to Bakassi has been employed. I have also tried to analyse the statements made by Nigerian and Cameroonian military authorities and their influence on the course of events and death of many people even if the figures were not uniform on both sides involved in the conflict. I also analysed media coverage of the conflict as seen through the eyes of the Nigerian and Cameroonian press. Several authors, both Cameroonian and Nigerian, analysed the conflict from diverse, and, in some cases, from complementary angles. Although most of the works discussed skirmishes between Cameroonian and Nigerian military in the Bakassi peninsula, these works did not go further to discuss in greater detail how these clashes contributed to the resolution of the conflict. Neither did they explain why even after its resolution, clashes continued; even if they were not directly related to the military, they pulled the military in to restore order and create harmonious coexistence among the people of the Bakassi peninsula.

The Bakassi Peninsula and Context of Military Activities

The Bakassi peninsula is a border area between Cameroon and Nigeria located at the southern end leading into the Atlantic Ocean. It is part of a 1,700 kilometre border between the two countries, one of the longest borders in Africa. Bakassi lies roughly between latitudes 4°25 and 5°10 N and longitudes 8°20 and 9°08 E. It consists of low-lying mangrove-covered islands in an area of about 665 km. It is situated at the eastern end of the Gulf of Guinea (Mbaga and Ngo, 7). Half of the mangrove is submerged as it protrudes into the Bight of Bonny (Babatola, 2012: 85).

The military clashes in Bakassi that started in 1981 were influenced by leaders of both countries. They used the crisis to divert attention from internal pressures and grievances of their people. The military leaders of Nigeria, notably Babangida and Abacha, were under pressure at home and abroad to introduce democracy and multiparty politics in Nigeria, which had for a greater part of its independence been ruled by the military after the 1966 *coup d'état*. The Nigerian government was also criticised for executing Ken

Saro Wiwa and other activists for protesting against the exploitation of oil in Ogoniland without a corresponding development of the area. Above all, the annulment of the 1993 elections in which Moshood Abiola was widely acclaimed to have won, challenged the authority of the government of Abacha. As a way of rallying the country towards a common destiny amidst these grievances, Abacha mobilised his forces towards Bakassi and insisted that Bakassi was not Cameroonian territory.

In Cameroon, following the re-introduction of multiparty politics through the launching of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) Party in Bamenda on May 26, 1990, the national media accused Nigeria of instigating illegal demonstrations in Bamenda and the University of Yaoundé and ofseeking to incite popular revolt. It also reported that the Nigerian anthem was sung by the protesting Anglophone students. The Nigerian media retorted arguing that Nigerians in Cameroon were being systematically harassed, detained, tortured, or murdered by Cameroonian security forces. The Cameroonian government was scared by growing militantism for Anglophone autonomy at a time when it was pursuing the Bakassi peninsula located within Anglophone territory in Cameroon. In a crackdown on this militantism, many Nigerians were also forced to return to Nigeria due to the harassing tax drive. Bamenda was also placed under a state of emergency after the contested 1992 presidential elections. Many of its inhabitants were subjected to all forms of human rights abuse (Ngoh, 2001). In the midst of these internal grievances, the Cameroon government intensified its military build-up in the Bakassi peninsula, which resulted in several conflicts in the area in the 1990s.

The increase in tension and conflicts between the Nigerian and Cameroonian military in the Bakassi peninsula was fuelled by reports that the area was extremely rich in diverse marine resources as well as by the discovery of huge deposits of crude oil and gas reserves (The Intractability, 2013; Baye, 10-11; Aghemelo and Ibhasebhor, 2006: 177). Neither Cameroon nor Nigeria was prepared to forfeit those riches of the Bakassi peninsula and increased their military presence in the area for effective occupation prior to the ICJ after Cameroon submitted the case to court on March 29, 1994. After the 2002 ICJ ruling, there was growing unease among residents of the Bakassi peninsula, who accused the Cameroonian military officials, especially gendarmes posted to work in the peninsula, of maltreating them. The many reports from them to local government authorities in the Cross River State brought the Nigerian military close to Bakassi even after their official withdrawal in 2008. The open confrontation that began between the military of Cameroon and Nigeria was against a background of leaders of both countries using it to boost their popularity at home and abroad.

Military Clashes, 1981 to 1996

Prior to the May 15-16, 1981, military conflict in the Bakassi peninsula between Cameroonian and Nigerian forces, there had been a determined effort by the military leaders of Nigeria to undermine the Maroua Accord between Ahidjo and Gowon

and to paint Gowon black for ceding Nigerian territory to Cameroon. General Murtala Muhammad and his successor, General Olusegun Obasanjo, denied or were unwilling to respect the border agreement and this created tension between Cameroon and Nigeria. Even after Shehu Shagari took over the leadership of Nigeria as a civilian ruler, the tension did not dissipate but it rather escalated into an open conflict.

The May 15-16, 1981, military clash in the Bakassi peninsula was a result of the failure by Nigeria to recognise that Bakassi was owned by Cameroon although effective occupation of the area for a long period had been by Nigerians, most of them fishermen. The skirmish was between a fast attack craft of the Nigerian police and a detachment of Cameroon's marines in the Rio-del-Rey. According to a Nigerian version, the 1981 incident was triggered by Cameroonian soldiers who ambushed Nigerian soldiers in three boats and killed five of them within their own territorial waters in the Bakassi peninsula (Omoigui, not dated). They argued that Nigerian soldiers were in the area to protect Nigerians, most of whom fishermen, from the Cameroonian gendarmes who were imposing high taxes on them (Okonkwo, 2009: 29).The Cameroonian version was that the incident of 1981 was triggered by Nigerian soldiers who crossed their territorial waters into the Rio-del-Rey and opened fire on the Cameroonian navy although Nigeria refuted this. The leadership of Nigeria argued that its soldiers were on the AkwaYafe when they were attacked by the Cameroonian navy. In the attack, the Cameroon navy killed five Nigerian soldiers (Omoigui, not dated).

The views about the cause of the military skirmish in May 1981 are conflicting and call for further interrogation. If the Nigerian military were in the area to protect its citizens from being over-taxed by the Cameroonian gendarmes, then they crossed the border without permission from the Cameroonian authorities and it was to show that Bakassi was not Cameroonian territory. Conversely, if the Nigerian soldiers were crafting a fast attack, this was not just for the sake of it but to either provoke or attack the Cameroonian navy stationed there. On the other hand, the Cameroon navy argued that the Nigerian military violated the boundary by moving into the Rio-del-Rey estuary; the government of Cameroon eventually apologised to Nigeria in July 1981 and supported the families of the victims. The Cameroon navy should be blamed for being the aggressor and not the Nigerian military. Again, the decision of the Cameroon government might have been not to hold on indefinitely in the face of superior Nigerian forces as was alleged by Iyob (2008: 32) when Cameroon referred the conflict to the ICJ. One may also argue that it was a diplomatic move to ease tension between Cameroon and Nigeria after the death of the five Nigerian soldiers, without Cameroon necessarily taking responsibility for the attack.Whatever the case, the incident of May 1981 was just the beginning of the many conflicts that followed.

The 1981 incident was inconclusive and continued under military rulers of Nigeria, notably General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, who was considered the "Maradona"

of Nigerian politics and his successor Sani Abacha and Ahidjo's successor Paul Biya. As if the killing of five Nigerians was not enough in May 1981, Cameroonian gendarmes occupied again, in May 1987, 16 border villages in Borno State in the North and were only forced out by the Nigerian army units. This incident made the Nigerian government to instruct all the State governors "to take military reprisals against any belligerent neighbouring country" (Oluda, 2011). This was an apparent reference to Cameroon. It was only after the visit of President Babangida to Cameroon in December that year that the simmering tension between the military of the two countries dissipated. Two years later, that is, in October 1989, Cameroonian gendarmes were said to have abducted four Nigerian custom officials on routine patrol at the border (Oluda, 2011). The same year, a Nigerian flag was reportedly hoisted at Jabane, some 6 kilometres into Cameroonian territory. It was removed on the instructions of Major Oyono, who was in charge of the Cameroon military in the Bakassi area at the time. Three weeks later, a signboard was found in the area indicating that the area was Nigerian territory (Atim, 2011: 52). In spite of these provocative incidents, the Nigerian military in the first instance did not further compound problems and in the second, the Cameroonian military also handled the matter professionally.

The first six years of the 1990s were eventful in military attacks and counter attacks in the Bakassi peninsula. On December 21, 1993, Nigerian forces invaded Bakassi and immediately incorporated it into the Federated States of AkwaIbom and Cross River (Vanguard, 2013; Issaka and Kapinga, 2008: 2). In response, Cameroonian troops attacked the village of Abana in Nigeria. This resulted in the death of 6 persons. Infuriated by this, Nigerian troops occupied the Cameroonian islands of Diamond and Djabane on January 3, 1994 (Atim, 2011: 52). Other raids were carried out by the Cameroonian military near the Bakassi peninsula between January 19 and February 8, 1994. These raids led to over 22,000 Nigerian refugees fleeing the area. Clashes between Cameroonian and Nigerian troops continued on February 18-19, 1994, in a show of strength and commitment to hold on to strategic bases in the Bakassi peninsula. This skirmish led to the death of 1 Cameroonian soldier and 30 Nigerian soldiers. These series of clashes made the government of Cameroon to request and receive military assistance from France. This was in keeping with military accords signed with France after the independence of French speaking Cameroon on January 1, 1960. France sent 2 helicopters and 30 troops to Yaoundé on February 27, 1994, to assist the Cameroonian military. The tussle for Bakassi raged on, and on September 18, 1994, 10 Cameroonian soldiers lost their lives in defence of the country in the Bakassi peninsula. Following the casualties on both sides resulting from the border incursions in the Bakassi peninsula between 1993 and 1994, the Cameroon government submitted the matter to the ICJ for adjudication on March 29, 1994 (Baye, 11; Oluda, 2011).

Explanations have been given to support the argument of Nigeria's deployment of thousands of troops on the Bakassi peninsula in the 1990s. According to Africa Confidential and other sources, the decision of Nigeria "to deploy a thousand troops on the [Bakassi] peninsula was in turn a reaction to the harassment of Nigerian fishing vessels and traders by Cameroon Gendarmes". Nigerian troops took several islands by storm in the Bakassi peninsula in an apparent attempt to reaffirm Abuja's resolve to build military bases, schools, and clinics in the area. (Tansa, 1996; Issaka and Kapinga, 2008: 4). The Cameroonian attacks between 1993 and 1994 were more or less retaliatory and provocative. Throughout the period of the Bakassi crisis, Nigerian citizens always decried the overzealousness and brutality of Cameroonian gendarmes. The gendarmes are a French force in Francophone Africa and were accused of brutality on Anglophone Cameroonians after the 1961 reunification. One must also note that the reign of Abacha in Nigeria was considered by many outside and perhaps within that country as the reign of terror. Unlike other leaders before him, who were involved in diplomatic discussions to resolve the crisis in the Bakassi peninsula, Abacha was an uncompromising leader and would go at any length to keep Bakassi under Nigerian control. The Nigerian military in the Bakassi peninsula was, under his leadership, as uncompromising as that of Cameroon. Weary of the hostilities, counter hostilities, loss of human lives, and destruction of property, Cameroon referred the matter to the ICJ at The Hague, Netherlands. Nigerian authorities accused the country of not handling the matter locally.

Whatever other arguments were raised by Nigeria to support its military incursions in Bakassi in the 1990s, there were utterances by some of its top military personnel that the country would lose if it gave up the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon. Some Nigerian naval officers told Reuters that the loss of Bakassi would cause severe strategic problems for the Nigerian Navy because it would render the naval base at Calabar useless. One of them said that "if we lose Bakassi, we lose our eastern access to the Atlantic. Our naval ships cannot move freely to Southern Africa, for instance, without Cameroon's approval". While arguments of gendarme brutality were raised time and again and should not be readily dismissed, the strategic location of Bakassi alone was enough reason to cause the Nigerian military to reject calls to cede Bakassi to Cameroon. The peninsula was needed to provide access to the Atlantic from the country's eastern flank.

The year 1994 was a turning point in the crisis over the Bakassi peninsula between Cameroon and Nigeria. Cameroon resorted to the force of argument and not the argument of force when it submitted a complaint with the ICJ over the ownership of Bakassi. It was also thanks to the good sense of President Olusegun Obasanjo to come to terms with reality and accept that Bakassi was Cameroonian territory. Although Cameroon took the matter to the ICJ for ruling, hostilities between the military of both countries continued even after the verdict of the court in 2002.The Yaoundé military authorities argued that the events of February 16-17, 1996, military and counter military

attacks in the Bakassi peninsula were triggered by the surprise attack of Cameroonian forces by Nigerian commandos beginning on February 3rd. They inflicted heavy losses on Cameroonian units, driving the Cameroonian forces to retreat (Tansa, 1996). Acknowledging the Nigerian attack and the impact it had on the Cameroonian soldiers, a senior military official in Yaoundé was quoted to have said that:

> Our boys were taken unawares as they watched a football match over television, but they fought gallantly to defend their positions and were only forced to retreat after running out of ammunition. We have been deceived by the commitment of both Nigerian and Cameroonian authorities to await the verdict of the International Court of Justice into going into slumber. This was without counting with the bad faith of our enemy. Nigeria must not take our leniency and respect for the judicial process with the International Court of Justice in The Hague as a sign of weakness. We will show them that we will fight and fight until we regain our territory (Tansa, 1996).

Cameroonian soldiers thought that the commitment of the leaders of the two countries and the adjudication of the ICJ on the ownership of Bakassi would bring about a respite in hostilities, but they were mistaken. If the so-called explanation by the military officials was to be taken seriously, then Nigerian troops could be accused of bad faith when they attacked Cameroonian bases without waiting for the ICJ verdict. In spite of this, Cameroonian soldiers can be faulted for unprofessionalism at the battle ground. They were supposed to be alert at all times. They failed to understand that the ICJ could rule on the case but did not have the jurisdiction to enforce its rulings. Again, how could men in uniform at the war front run out of ammunition quickly, with an impending onslaught from an enemy force? Someone somewhere did not do their job and the soldiers ran out of ammunition too soon. How could soldiers all gather to watch a match without adequate safeguards for their security and the territory they were out to protect? In fact, it was likely not leniency and respect for Nigerian troops that forced the Cameroonian forces to retreat but rather their ill-preparedness to strike when they were taken by surprise. They should not have been taken by surprise in the first place because they deployed to Bakassi not to watch games or to respectand be lenient to the Nigerian military, but to secure Bakassi for Cameroon.

Although the Cameroonian military can be blamed for the military reversals of February 16-17, 1996, it was the Nigerian forces that were the aggressors. Their attack was a demonstration of the determination to inflict more casualties on the Cameroonians and probably force Cameroon to withdraw the case from the ICJ. This was not because like the senior military personnel in Yaoundé quipped, as the Cameroonian troops would fight to the very end to ensure that Cameroon legally controlled Bakassi.

As Cameroonian military authorities cried foul against the Nigerian military devastating blow, the Nigerian military official Brigadier Fred Chijuka, Director of Defence

Information, denied that other conflicts had erupted besides the February 3, 1996 skirmishes. He accused Cameroonians of whipping up sentiments to justify their aggression on Nigerians. These military attacks of February 1996 forced many Cameroonians living in the peninsula to escape to safety (Tansa, 1996). When these incidents of February 1996 took place, Cameroon's Ministry of External Relations issued a press statement. According to the press statement, Cameroon lost only one soldier, but the military authorities claimed that the casualty figures were higher. While the Nigerian military and Cameroon's Ministry of External Relations played down the severity of the attack, the defence officials in Cameroon acknowledged its great consequences. Whatever interpretation was made of these clashes, there was an unprovoked attack by the Nigerian military and condemnation of it by the Cameroonian government and military officials. The Cameroonian military, however, declared its commitment to retaliate in the future. This attack, after Cameroon had submitted the case to the ICJ, made the court in a ruling of 12 to 5 votes on March, 15, 1996, to ask Cameroon and Nigeria to ensure that the presence of any armed forces in the Bakassi peninsula did not extend beyond the positions they had prior to February 3, 1996, when the first attack took place (Summary of the Summary, 1996; Kamto, 2008: 15).

Considering that both parties were stuck to their position of keeping Bakassi at any cost, on May 3-6, 1996, another skirmish broke out between these forces. The Nigerian Defence Headquarters reported that long-range artillery, helicopter gunships and gunboats had been used and diplomats said that 50 Nigerian soldiers were killed and a number of them taken prisoners. No information was available on the Cameroonian casualties. The Nigerian Foreign Minister Chief Tom Ikimi also said that Cameroon's foreign partners, without actually naming them, might have urged the country to attack Nigeria (Nigeria and Cameroon Clash, 1996: 5). When corpses of Nigerian soldiers were taken home, some Nigerian soldiers, in outrage, disguised as onion merchants, opened fire on the Cameroon patrol teamat the border killing several soldiers. Cameroon claimed that only two of its soldiers were killed in this incident. Other minor clashes between the Nigerian and Cameroonian military took place prior to the 2002 ICJ ruling. One of them was on November 23, 1997; it led to the death of 1 Cameroonian soldier. Then, between February 23 and 25, 1998, the clashes led to the death of 7 Cameroonian soldiers. Between October 12 and 14, 2000, Cameroonian forces attacked several Nigerian villages in the border region and the result was the death of several individuals. The following year, between May and June, Nigerian soldiers retaliated by invading three localities in Bakassi (Atim, 2011: 54).

Generally speaking, common sense would have required that Cameroonian and Nigerian troops wait for the outcome of the ICJ case over Bakassi submitted to it by Cameroon in 1994 but this was not to be. Conflicts erupted time and again between 1996 and 2001, with consequences beyond expectations. The court ruling in 2002 did not stop

Nigerian and Cameroonian troops from clashing in and around the Bakassi peninsula, or other armed groups from rebelling.

Role of the Military, 2002 to 2013

The year 2002 marked another milestone in the struggle over the Bakassi peninsula between Cameroon and Nigeria. The ICJ ruled the case over Bakassi on October 10, 2002, in favour of Cameroon, among other landmark decisions concerning the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. In keeping with the spirit of the ICJ ruling, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Koffi Atta Annan arranged for another meeting between Presidents Paul Biya and Olusegun Obasanjo in Geneva, Switzerland, on November 15, 2002. During this meeting, leaders of both countries agreed to establish the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC) to "consider ways of following up on the ICJ ruling and moving the process forward" (Mashood and Kapinga, 2008: 2-3). Four years later, the implementation of the ICJ ruling was launched, including plans for signing of an agreement at Greentree, New York. The timetable for the handover of the Bakassi peninsula was agreed to take place by June 2008, including the treatment of local populations. Nigeria would maintain a presence in 18% of the territory for two years, ending in June 2008 (Mashood and Kapinga, 2008: 3).

Following the ICJ ruling and the steps that were taken for a successful transfer of authority from Nigeria to Cameroon, one would have thought that the skirmishes of the 1990s would give way to reason and restraint on both military sides, but this was not the case. Matters were further compounded by the activities of militant groups in the Bakassi peninsula, by the provocative acts of Nigerian military, and by overzealousness and impatience on behalf of the Cameroonian forces. The military activities of Cameroon and Nigeria were also determined by the commitment not to derail the peaceful process of handover of Bakassi. While some clashes were a result of selfishness, others were an attempt to stop other forces from torpedoing the peace process.

An early sign of a military clash between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula was on June 21, 2005. Nigerian troops fired rocket-propelled grenades at Cameroon security posts, killing one Cameroonian soldier (Tarlebbea and Baroni, 2010: 206). No immediate reason was given for this attack, but from the looks of things, this might have been an attempt to torpedo the peaceful process of the transfer of the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon, which had been agreed by the two leaders to begin in 2006 and end in June 2008. It might also have been overzealousness on the part of those who launched the attack. Having weapons and not using them was like idling in the peninsula, and the only way to use the stockpile of weapons was to foment problems and then justify their use against Cameroon military targets.

This military attack, however, did not prevent leaders of Cameroon and Nigeria from pursuing the ICJ ruling and the Greentree Agreement of November 2002. On August 1,

2006, the Nigerian military played a momentous role in the peaceful resolution of the Bakassi crisis. Some 3,000 troops began to withdraw, and on August 14 of the same year, a ceremony marked the formal handover of the northern part of the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon. This withdrawal received appreciation from the presidency of Cameroon. The Secretary General at the Presidency praised the Nigerian government for the sense of understanding to have respected the calendar for the transfer of Bakassi to Cameroon (Yaoundé Commends, 2006). After the withdrawal of Nigerian troops, the Cameroon flag was hoisted to show effective occupation of the area vacated by the Nigerian military (Baye, 11; Niger-Thomas, 2011: 55).

In spite of these positive signs of a peaceful transfer of authority to Cameroon over the Bakassi peninsula, an incident on November 12, 2007, threatened the success of this process. Unidentified gunmen launched a string of attacks against Cameroonian troops in parts of the territory already ceded to Cameroon. In their first assault using speed boats, twenty-one Cameroonian soldiers lost their lives at Ikang, and the assailants got away with some military equipment and ammunition (Mbachu, 2008; Atim, 2011: 55). This attack did not seriously affect the transfer of territory to Cameroon. The Nigerian military had committed to the transfer of the territory by vacating the northern part of the territory, as per the Greentree Agreement between the two countries. Disgruntled elements within the Bakassi peninsula and other groups in Nigeria had taken advantage of this to create confusion, but Cameroon exercised patience and the Nigerian military was vigilant not to allow any sectarian group in Nigeria to create unnecessary tension between Cameroonians and Nigerians living in the Bakassi peninsula.

In keeping its commitment to the successful resolution of the conflict, the Nigerian military blamed armed militants fighting in the nearby oil-rich Niger Delta. This blame was rejected by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) through its spokesperson Jomo Gbomo, who accused the Nigerian military of the attack, out of anger that Cameroonian troops had ignored weapons deliveries received by the movement through the estuary by Bakassi (Mbachu, 2008).The blame and counter blame notwithstanding, the Nigerian military had come to terms with the hard reality and decided to commit itself to it. Since the armed groups were against the state of Nigeria over oil proceeds, they could foment further problems between Cameroon and Nigeria in order to benefit in the process.

The armed attacks did not dissipate. In early June 2008, six Cameroonians, including five soldiers and a local administrator namely Fonya Felix Morfaw were killed in a similar attack at theAkwa headquarters of the Kombo Abedimo sub division. Then, on June 13, 2008, three Cameroonian soldiers were injured in another planned attack.The assailants made their presence felt again on July 24, 2008 and killed two Cameroonian soldiers in Kombo a Janea. Four other Cameroonian soldiers were seriously wounded; ten of the assailants were killed in return, and eight of them taken prisoner by Cameroonian

soldiers (Mbachu, 2008; Atim, 2011: 55). In the same year as Cameroonians were targets of elimination, the Nigerian Chief of Defence Staff, OwoyeAzazi, said that the Nigerian military had not been consulted during the negotiations leading to the transfer of Bakassi to Cameroon. He regretted the fact that Nigeria had lost a strategic military navigation channel yielding to the Gulf of Guinea. He simply re-echoed statements made some years before by a top military personnel. Accusations against armed groups of fomenting these attacks may be taken with a pinch of salt, considering the utterances of Azazi. Cameroonians might have thought rightly and/or wrongly that the armed insurrections were state sponsored to create confusion and take back the part of Bakassi already handed to Cameroon. While Owoye Azazi made statements of regret, Cameroon's Defence Minister Remy ZeMeka was quoted to have said in June that the violent attacks were caused by armed gangs in the Bakassi peninsula involved in drug trafficking, piracy and kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea (Mbachu, 2012).

In spite of the spate of attacks on August 14, 2008, the Nigerian Army Amphibious Forces Suncraft landing craft left Cameroon's Bakassi peninsula. Nigeria completed the withdrawal of its military, police, and administration from the peninsula, as stated in the Greentree Agreement. In recognition of this, the Nigerian flag was lowered and the Cameroon flag hoisted in the entire peninsula (Baye, 9; Atim, 2011: 55; Daily Punch, 2013). Cameroon had thus taken control of a region it had fought for, and for which lost many of its citizens and soldiers, much like Nigeria. The issue at this point was to give Nigerians living in the region time to make up their mind if in the future they would return to Nigeria or remain there as foreigners and respect the laws of Cameroon. This also came to pass and today foreigners in the territory observe the laws of Cameroon.

The complete handing over of Bakassi took place on August 14, 2008, but the military of both countries were still buried there defending the interests of their citizens and countries. Even when Cameroon took over Bakassi, the people of the Bakassi peninsula kept complaining about the harassment of Cameroonian gendarmes. According to the Punch Newspaper of March 23, 2009, Nigerians kept fleeing from Bakassi because of these gendarmes' harassments. At EkpriIkang, in the Cross River State, the number of refugees swelled to 1,500 in a camp that was initially meant for only 400 people. On October 16, 2009, Cameroonian gendarmes killed six Nigerian fishermen in Bakassi territorial waters. On March 7, 2013, Cameroonian security authorities attacked EfutObotIkot, a settlement located in the Bakassi peninsula, part of Cameroonian sovereign territory and home to thousands of Bakassi displaced people. The attack resulted in the death of 5 people and 1,800 displacements. There were also reports that those who stayed back in Bakassi after Cameroon took over ownership were continuously persecuted by Cameroonian security forces (The Intractability of Territorial Dispute, 2013).This raised concerns as to whether the Cameroon government was committed to treating Nigerians going about their business fairly in the Bakassi peninsula.

These reports and activities of the Cameroonian military led Nigerians and the military to retaliate. In February 2011, for instance, the District Officer of Kumbo Abedimo Mr Ayuk Edward Takor and 12 other Cameroonians were taken hostage and were only liberated after a huge ransom was paid by the government of Cameroon (Atim, 2011: 55) to those who had abducted them. Nigerian soldiers who had pulled out completely from the Bakassi peninsula witnessed the return of some of them. Officers of the 82nd Division of the Nigerian Army held meetings at Ikang with top government officials under tight security. Although nothing filtered from this meeting, speculations were rife that this meeting was not unconnected with the threats by the Bakassi Self Determination Front (BSDF) to attack Cameroon in the peninsula, and with the buildup of arms by Cameroon in the peninsula (Cameroon/Nigeria Frontier, 2013). The Nigerian government, on its part, is concluding arrangements to set up two forward operational bases in the Bakassi Local Government Area of the Cross River State. Their aim is to check cases of alleged incessant killings, maiming and destruction of properties of Nigerians by Cameroonian gendarmes based in the area. The two operational bases according to Brigadier General Okwudili Azinta, Commander of the 13th Brigade of the Nigeria Army, would be set up at Dayspring 1 and Ikang. The Navy would have their base at Dayspring 1 and the Army would set up theirs at Ikang. These considerations are based on the way Nigerian citizens have been handled by Cameroonian military personnel sent to the Bakassi peninsula. On March 7, 2013, for instance, 5 indigenes of Bakassi, who resisted being forcibly evicted from Efut Obot Ikot were allegedly killed by Cameroonian military authorities, while 1800 of the displaced persons are being camped at Akwa Ikot Edem primary school in the Akpabuyo Local Government Area (Daily Punch, 2013).

Concluding Remarks

This paper has attempted to examine the role of the Nigerian and Cameroonian military in the Bakassi crisis between 1981, when the first clash took place, and 2013, when there were still misgivings as to the treatment of Nigerian citizens living in this peninsula. The paper has shown that intra and inter-state conflicts have seen the military play a role in either exacerbating them or bringing them to an end, since they are those at the war front, and they determine to a certain degree the course of events or decisions taken by leaders of the countries involved in the conflicts or crises. Such a role should therefore not be undermined as has often been the case after the cessation of conflicts. The military defend the territorial integrity of their country and assist their citizens or citizens of other countries who are victims of the war beyond creating safe corridors for food and other supplies to those in need of them.

With regards to the Bakassi conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon, the military of both countries paid a high price. Many of them were killed and others wounded in the process. They also defended the interest of their citizens in the Bakassi peninsula by coming to their aid. In spite of the years of incessant clashes between the Nigerian and

Cameroonian military, which led to deaths and loss of property, there was collaboration in the midst of intermittent skirmishes to support the ICJ ruling and respect the timetable of the Greentree Accord signed between Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Paul Biya of Nigeria and Cameroon on November 15, 2002. Had the military not exercised restraint and patience, the peace process would have been torpedoed by other non-state armed groups that sprang up in the Bakassi peninsula, who had support from other ethnic militias in Nigeria. The resolution of the Bakassi peninsula conflict is thanks greatly to the military of both countries that fought, as they agreed to the ICJ ruling that Bakassi was Cameroonian territory. One challenge for both military is how to work together to prevent armed groups from using Bakassi as a hideout for their militant activities, because this will only undermine the authority of both states. The Cameroonian military should also be vigilant and above all build a culture of peace with Nigerian citizens who have opted to remain in this area, where they were born.

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AN OVERVIEW
OF THE SYRIAN INSURGENCY

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Abstract. *This paper explores some of the structural conditions existing in the body of Syrian Opposition, both political and armed ones, focusing on some of the circumstances that allowed the rise of the extremist factions that are now the main opponents of the Assad regime. Without entering into the dynamics of the Syrian conflict, also significant for explaining the rise of violent, extremist Islam, our endeavor only marginally touches its current representatives, while attempting to prove that the rise of extremism was a natural occurrence and, given the history of Syria's flirt with terrorism, maybe unavoidable.*

Keywords: *Syria, Assad, Syrian opposition, political Islam, terrorism.*

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The wave of the Arab Spring that began in Tunisia in January 2011 arrived in Syria on March 15th, with protests in the southern town of Daraa against the torture of students guilty for anti-government graffiti. The heavy retaliation of authorities led to the spread of the protests across the vast majority of the country. Although President Bashar al-Assad made some minor attempts of reform, the brutality of the government's crackdown in the following weeks and months only served to generate increased unrest and, at the same time, made a political compromise increasingly unlikely. Defectors from the army started attacks against the government, only increasing the level of violence. Across the span of more than two years, the conflict escalated into a full-fledged civil war between the Assad regime and an array of armed groups with various political objectives.

The increased levels of violence made millions of people lose their homes inside Syria or flee across the borders into the neighboring countries, where shortages are leading to terrible sufferings, while also threatening to spillover the conflict outside Syrian borders, especially in the case of Lebanon or Iraq. Complicated by a large number of divisions, the long duration of the conflict also led to its radicalization, with more and more sectarian overtones.

At the same time, as the conflict continued to drag on, foreign actors were more and more drawn into it, all of them for different reasons, ranging from simple aid for the refugees to open support for the warring sides and further prolonging the bloodshed. The increased outside interference and the attempts of direct foreign intervention, as was the case in early September 2013, threatened to engulf the whole region into war. Attempts of reaching a peaceful settlement are finally made due to external pressures, but with uncertain chances of success.

Since 2012, Islamic fundamentalism also became present in the Syrian civil war. In the form of the domestic al-Nusra Front and the later addition of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) with roots in neighboring Iraq, the advance of al-Qaeda-affiliated religious extremism has been steady. They were slow to rise, but more disciplined, more violent and better organized than their secular FSA counterparts and by early 2013 their success was clear, marked by the large swathes of Syria they had captured. Their example was inspiring and others followed. Many factions joined to form the Syrian Islamic Front in early 2013, which later reorganized in the Islamic Front during the autumn of 2013. This Salafist umbrella organization is now the most powerful coalition of armed groups in Syria estimated to field around 40,000 fighters.

The increased radicalism of these groups and their successes in the field are danger- ous for the entire region and are threatening the peace inroads that are taking place in Geneva. During the last months, this new actor in the Syrian civil war proved its strength in launching coordinated attacks and inflicting several defeats on ISIS. Although this news of severe infighting between radical, extremist rebel factions may be considered encouraging, it can also have negative consequences. Should the Islamic Front emerge victorious, it would further prove that radical violent Islam is the key to win the war. It would serve to sideline the FSA and further radicalize the conflict. It would also cast doubts on how a post-war Syria would look like.

This paper explores some of the reasons that over time converged into the current situ- ation when most of the Syrian Insurgency adheres to a radicalized Salafist orientation, with Jihadist overtones. There are many causes for this development, among some of which are an incapable Syrian political opposition, an increasingly unsuccessful, cor- rupt, and unpopular Free Syrian Army, an increasingly religiously motivated armed opposition, the legacy of decades of Syrian state-sponsored terrorism that eventually

turned against the Assad regime, outside involvement in the conflict for certain extremist factions, a constant inflow of radicalized foreign volunteers joining the call of fighting for Islam, and so on.

All of these causes are equally important in explaining the ascension of the extremist, fundamentalist factions that are currently forming the large majority of the armed opposition against the Assad regime.

Our research will focus only on a few of these, though. The exact process of radicalization of the armed opposition, although vital in understanding the current state of events, is a topic too large for the purpose of this paper and a summary analysis would only serve to offer an incomplete picture of the subject. Also missing from this analysis is the involvement of foreign actors which contributed to the rise of extremism and the case of foreign fighters in the Syrian civil war. Although there is undisputed evidence to prove both of these facts, their covert and/or insufficiently documented nature prevent us from having a clear image of how much of an impact they had on the process of radicalization.

We shall explore the evolution of the political opposition in Syria in the last decades, to understand why it has failed to offer an alternate political solution to the Assad regime, a solution that could have attracted a majority of the Syrian people to its cause and could have prevented the civil war and the rise of extremism. Despite numerous attempts of reforming the Syrian society and state before the start of the Syrian Uprising in 2011, and despite outside efforts of strengthening it, Syrian political opposition, both from inside the country and from exile, has failed every single time to achieve enough unity and cohesion so as to become a credible alternative to Assad.

We will also examine the Free Syrian Army (FSA), its nature from the time of its inception to the present day, when it constitutes only a small fraction of the armed opposition. Despite high hopes of success and large amounts of foreign aid invested in it, it has failed to achieve a decisive military victory against Assad's Syrian Arab Army (SAA). Although it has managed to achieve some successes, especially in the winter and spring of 2013, inherent structural weaknesses prevented it from becoming a real military force for the opposition.

The final section of this paper looks into how the legacy of Syrian state-sponsoring of international terrorism as a foreign policy tool also contributed to some extent to the current state of events. Decades of financing, training and aiding international terrorism, especially in neighboring Iraq during the last decade, although sometimes served Syrian national interests, were a dangerous game to play. We believe that Syria's involvement with terrorism of the worst kind eventually had a boomerang effect, in that it served to build the foundations upon which terrible factions like Jabhat al-Nusra and the ISIS would later rise.

Syrian Opposition before 2011

Media reports on the early Syrian Uprising often made use of the phrase "the Syrian opposition", implying that there was a single and recognized group that was representing the Syrians with anti-regime views. The facts were, and three years later still are, quite the opposite: besides the actual absence of a united, monolithic, Syrian opposition, until 2011 there was not even a faction that could have been called dominant among the various Syrian opposition groups.

The political landscape of the opposition was so fragmented and disjoined that there was a constant bickering among the opposition activists themselves about what groups or coalitions of groups were more effective than others in their resistance against the Assad regime, or which enjoyed more popular support than others.

In the beginning, all the organized groups were small, and sometimes the word of a prominent dissident carried more weight than that of a political party with many members.

This sort of dysfunctions are, nonetheless, only one of the reasons for which the Syrian opposition is in a perpetual state of fracture. Another reason is that the current movements and organizations which are calling themselves "the opposition" have emerged after half a century of Baathist rule. Accordingly, some well-established groups are standing side by side with organizations that were just created, while various personal and political rivalries with decades-old roots are constantly disturbing the opposition even today (Lund, Weakening regime, weaker opposition, 2011).

The Muslim Brotherhood of Syria

The Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1944. For a while it made the pragmatic decision to participate in the elections and parliamentary politics, but after the coup of 1963 by the Baath Party it suffered a process of radicalization.

During the 1970's, the group underwent divisions along ideological and regional rifts, with a violent Hama faction, the Fighting Vanguard, of Jihadist branding, which began carrying terrorist attacks against governmental and religious minorities' targets (Seale, 1989).

The regime declared war on the Muslim Brotherhood in 1979, and defeated it with the use of brutal measures, out of which stands the infamous "Hama Massacre" of February 1982, with casualties estimates varying between 30,000 and 40,000 (The Middle East Media Research Institute, 2002).

The Muslim Brotherhood was forced to flee into exile and spent the following decades in hiding and dealing with further internal divisions. After Bashar al-Assad replaced his father in 2000, the organization tried to reconcile with the regime, in the context of the

Damascus Spring. It moderated its agenda and attempted to restore connections with other secular opposition groups. These efforts were distilled into the "*Political Project for the Future Syria*" of 2004, in which the organization called for a non-sectarian multi-party democracy (IkhwanWeb, 2005).

At the beginning of the Arab Spring in Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood was the largest opposition group. Although it had no significant presence within the country since 1982, it was considered a symbol of opposition for a large number of conservative Syrians.

The National Democratic Assembly (NDA)

The organization was established in 1979, as a coalition of various Arab parties of nationalist and leftist nature, but it was put down soon after, in 1980. Although it was largely ineffectual, it was considered the main structure for the secular opposition until the succession of Bashar al-Assad.

While a very weak umbrella organization, the NDA comprised individuals with considerable experience and international contacts and in 2011 was the most important structure of "traditional opposition" within Syria (The Majalla, 2012).

The Damascus Declaration (DD)

Due to the Syrian complications in Lebanon with the Hariri assassination of 2005, the Syrian policy towards the new state of Iraq and its efforts of undermining the US-led coalition, various Syrians opposing the authoritarianism of the Assad regime believed that another US-led regime-change operation would soon come to Syria. This context led to new efforts to unify the ranks of the opposition movements.

As such, in October 2005 the Damascus Declaration was announced, which was a joint statement by a large number of opposition groups asking for a more liberal and open Syrian society and a multi-party democracy. Among the signatories were the Muslim Brotherhood, the NDA, Kurdish parties, and various prominent dissidents (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012).

But the curse of division and split followed this unifying attempt too. In January 2006 there was already a split between the Islamism vision of the Muslim Brotherhood and the secularist ideas of the other parties. The Brotherhood soon left the Damascus Declaration and joined the National Salvation Front in 2006. In 2007, the DD leadership election led to various conflicts between nationalists and socialists on one hand, and Syrian-based activists against exiled dissidents. The organization was further weakened by the regime arrests of a number of its members. The new leadership in exile elected in 2009 retained very little – if any at all – connection with the opposition inside Syria (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2012).

To summarize, the decade before the Arab Spring erupted in Syria witnessed a number of attempts by Syrian opposition movements and organizations to unite themselves and to present a more powerful resistance against the authoritarian nature of the Assad regime. But all these were exercises in futility, as the divisions and splits soon followed every one of these unifying enterprises. In addition, regime pressure against the opposition movements made these attempts even more difficult.

On the eve of the Arab Spring, all the major Syrian political opposition parties were in complete disarray. The Damascus Declaration suffered a number of splits and was confined into exile; the NDA was paralyzed between bickering among its main parties, while the NSF had ceased to exist.

This disastrous state of the Syrian political opposition just before 2011 was to have important effects on the dynamics of the Syrian Uprising. It meant that the old, existing, political parties were virtually incapable to aggregate the demands of the Syrian society, and that could be seen with extreme clarity throughout 2011, when there were many protests in Syria, but they proved incapable of formulating a unifying set of demands and pressure the Assad regime into offering real reforms. It meant that the Uprising was carried out mainly at a local, community level, by various individuals willing to confront the regime, and not on a national level, due to the lack of a vision for the entirety of the Syrian society. It also meant that without a unified political vision for reforms, what was left was only the physical removal of the regime. It meant that if solutions were impossible to find within Syria, they were to be offered, or imposed, from the outside, by various third parties. In the regional and international context and dynamics, it meant that, should the Assad regime fail or refuse to give in to the protesters'demands, civil war was inevitable.

The Syrian Revolution

Inspired by the previous uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the Arab Spring began in Syria too, in March, 2011. Attempts by the exiled groups to start protests during the winter failed. What sparked the revolution was a local protest in Daraa in mid-March, in southern Syria.

The "traditional opposition"played no role in the drift towards the revolution that followed in the spring of 2011, but, in fact, was caught completely off guard by the start of the revolution. Following the dissent and divisions of the previous years, it was too weak in terms of numbers, organization, and resources to bring any contribution to the anti-governmental protests and activities within the country. As such, this "traditional opposition" was not in charge of the Revolution, although it managed to offer some sort of assistance (The Christian Science Monitor, 2011).

From Daraa, the revolution spread quickly to other parts of the country, with help from the international media, which reported the anti-regime protests. By the summer of

2011 it had spread to most of central and northern parts of Syria, like Idlib, Homs and Aleppo, while other areas remained undisturbed. As the uprising increased in intensity and spread to different areas, the importance of sectarian feeling and class divisions became more and more apparent.

Protests were concentrated in rural area populated by Sunni Arabs. Although the larger cities of Damascus and Aleppo also had their share of protests and activism, there were larger street rallyings in the majority Sunni Arab countryside or in the poor suburbs with rural immigrants. The Kurdish areas in the northeast were generally calmer, given the Assad regime strategy of alleviating the Kurds. Given the Alawi majority in the government and the influence of the secular Baathist Party, areas in Syria with a larger concentration of religious minorities have, in general, followed the leadership of the regime.These areas include the Alawi-majority in the northwest and the Druze in the south. The Syrian Christians, spread in the major cities, also followed the regime, fearing the rising of Islamists.

Although some concessions were made by the Assad regime in the spring of 2011, like the end of the state of emergency, the release of political prisoners, the promise of a new constitution and permission to form political parties, major structural reforms were avoided out of fear that the regime would collapse. Such steps were too little, too late to appease the revolutionary movement in the country. As the protests continued and increased in intensity, regime attempts of cracking down the movement led to an increasing number of casualties, which, in turn, meant that hopes of a political compromise solution disappeared (CNN, 2011).

Throughout the summer of 2011, various paramilitary groups began to appear along the Turkish and Lebanese borders, with increased resort to violence on both sides. A majority of these armed factions began to use the name of Free Syrian Army (FSA), while some of them seemed to be controlled from Turkey by the defector colonel Riad al-Assad (Holliday, 2012). Also, sectarian killings around Homs in November 2011 between Alawites and Sunnis led to a general decline in confessional relations, particularly in the religiously mixed areas of Syria (Shadid, 2011).

The international developments in the winter of 2011 ruled out a Libya-style foreign intervention to depose Bashar al-Assad, given the opposition of Russia and China in the UN Security Council. This opposition led to increased demands, both foreign and domestic, for international support to the FSA. In the spring of 2012, a number of states (Turkey, Qatar, USA, France, and Saudi Arabia) formed the "Friends of Syria", a group of sympathetic governments, which tried to garner support for the Syrian revolution. This group, together with help from individual countries, favored the Syrian National Council, an opposition organization formed in the summer of 2011, and tried to link it to the FSA (Reuters, 2012).

The trends that appeared within the Syrian opposition movements in 2011, its political weakness, the lack of central leadership and coordination, a multitude of local-based militias, of which only a handful are affiliated to the FSA, the fragmentation of the political opposition between the exile-dominated, pro-FSA and pro-foreign intervention Syrian National Council (SNC), the National Coordination Bureau (NCB), a nonviolent and opposed to intervention organization within Syria, together with the ethnic-based Kurdish National Council (KNC), various smaller political groups and individual dissidents, would set the tone for the next years of the Syrian Uprising and the subsequent civil war.

The Syrian National Council

Until the late 2012, this was Syria's largest opposition coalition and successful in attracting international support for its cause. While attempts to organize it started as early as August 2011, it was formally established in October 2011, with Turkish and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' backing.

The Council is dominated by political exiles from the previous decade, with both Islamist and liberal participation. An umbrella organization, it comprises the biggest Syrian opposition individual party – the Muslim Brotherhood, remnants of the Damascus Declaration, the Assyrian Democratic Organization and other minor parties. A characteristic of the Council is the division between the leadership in exile and the Syrian-based grassroots organizations, such as the Local Coordination Committees. The Council lacks support from Syria's socialist and Arab nationalist groups, which tend to favor the NCB. Its Kurdish and religious minorities' representation remains weak (Foreign Policy, 2011).

Given the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Council and the strong backing from its main supporters – Turkey and GCC countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, supporters that provide almost the full financial support for the Council – fears were raised that the organizationwould have a much too powerful Islamist orientation. This has led to constant divisions, defections and rejoining by various members (Solomon & Ayman, 2012).

Like many other opposition groups, the Council has little, if any, real control over the developments inside Syria, but has managed to secure some symbolic allegiance from the protesters in the street, which gives it some political weight. In late 2011, the Council began coordinating its efforts with the FSA, an important addition to its political weight (Zavis & Marrouch, 2011). But this joining of forces between the largest coalition of armed resistance factions inside Syria and the largest political coalitions outside Syria also gave rise to the question of who was to have the upper hand: the Council and its exiles, or the FSA battalions?

In November 2012, the Council joined the Syrian National Coalition, another umbrella coalition organization. Inside the Coalition, it retained the largest number of seats, 22

out of 60. Until January 2014 it was subsumed to this organization. It split from it in January 2014, in protest over Coalition's decision to participate in the Geneva II Peace Conference for Syria (The Times of Israel, 2014).

Given the defeat of the FSA at the hands of the Islamist rebels in December 2013, the Council has lost a significant part of its political weight. At the beginning of 2014 its future remains uncertain, but if the past serves for guidance, it will most likely suffer further divisions and splits.

The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary
and Opposition Forces (Syrian National Coalition – SNC/SOC)

In November 2012 another, even larger, coalition was formed in Doha, Qatar. Its components are the Syrian National Council (until January 20th, 2014), the Democratic Party of the Arab Socialist Union, the Movement (Together) for a Free and Democratic Syria, the National Democratic Block and the National Alliance.

This was a renewed attempt to strengthen the Syrian opposition and give it more weight. It was accomplishedfollowing international pressure to achieve a greater political representation, with parties from the entire Syrian political spectrum being united under a single banner. The location of its inception, in Doha, Qatar, is significant, given the substantial financial support offered by the GCC countries.

The Coalition was recognized by a number of countries as the legitimate Syrian government, but its reach inside Syria was minimal at best, and almost nonexistent today. Like all the other Syrian political coalitions, it suffered from extensive internal dissent, with its leadership being vacant for many months in 2013 (Al Jazeera, 2013). Last, but probably not least, its members were divided over the international policies regarding the foreign intervention in Syria, with the SNC splitting from the Coalition in January 2014, in opposition to the talks with the Assad regime in Geneva.

Its creation came at a time when was clear that the FSA was incapable of winning the Syrian Civil War and was slowly degenerating into a collection of warring local warlords, more interested in personal enrichment from war profiteering than in fighting against the Assad regime. It also coincided with the rise of the Salafist and Jihadist factions in the war, of which most notable were the Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). All these developments adversely affected the Coalition, weakening its internal importance.

The National Coordination Committee
for the Forces of Democratic Change (NCC/NCB)

This coalition organization was formed at a meeting in Damascus between various Syrian secular political and Kurdish parties, in June 2011.

The coalition is based in Syria, it favors regime change in the country and seeks the transition to a democratic government, and adheres to three principles: No violence, No sectarianism, and No foreign intervention (National Coordination Committee, 2012). Its strategy of trying to negotiate the fall of the Assad regime has attracted high criticism from other opposition organizations and it was left isolated on the political spectrum. It has even brought accusations of being an extension of the government (Reuters, 2012).

Although isolated, the NCC is the result of a significant attempt of unifying the secular, socialist, and nationalist spectrum of the Syrian opposition inside the country. To a certain degree, it represents a counterbalance to the foreign-based and Western-supported SNC. Its member parties were joined together in 2011 by a common fear of an expected Western intervention in Syria along the Libyan lines; such an intervention would likely result in a sectarian conflict and maybe even the dissolution of the country.

The NCC is considered to be the "moderate political opposition" inside Syria, but over the years its importance has faded away, as the Syrian Civil War increased in intensity. True to its declarations, in January 2014 it rejected the Geneva II Peace Conference on Syria, on the grounds that it constituted a foreign intervention in the domestic issues of Syria (Black, 2014).

Local Coordination Committees (LCCs)

At the outbreak of the Syrian Uprising, the "traditional" opposition in Syria was caught unprepared, and for a while it lagged behind the events, trying to catch up with the spontaneous popular protests. In the first few weeks, there were no leaders of the Syrian revolution to speak of, but in late April 2011, various local councils and committees began to emerge.

Even though various party members were present in these groups, there were no formal organizational ties to the existing political groups. As the revolution continued, more developed and formalized structures appeared in various "liberated areas" from the regime control, which were replacing the absent official Baathist bureaucracy. A good example of such true "grassroots" organizations was the "Homs Revolutionary Council", established in late 2011 and which functioned as a de facto revolutionary government in areas of Homs outside the regime control (Al Jazeera, 2012).

The local coordination groups began to form early in the uprising, following the model established by previous revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. The term LCCs became loosely associated with various movements dominated by young Syrian activists. However, their main activities are in the media – relaying information to and from the country.

Most of the LCCs were trying to fill the gap between the various local demonstrator networks, usually organized on a neighborhood, village or town basis, by transferring the information to and from them and relaying it further to other opposition groups or

the international media. The members of the LCCs did not usually initiate the protests themselves.

Their actions put them in a very visible role in the early days of the Syrian Uprising, but as the time progressed and more and more fighting factions appeared, these began to communicate to other groups or with the outside world by means of the Internet, either by creating their own webpages, uploading videos to YouTube or even by Twitter. This means of communication is has been extensively used by the Salafist and Jihadist factions in the Syrian Civil War.

Kurdish-based Opposition

In the early days of the Syrian Uprising, the Assad regime, fearing a repeat of the Qamishli riots of 2004, came ahead to the long-time Kurdish demands of citizenship and increased cultural liberty. Some local festivals were allowed and the citizenship issue was quickly solved through presidential decree (KurdWatch, 2011).

Under these and other regime concessions, the Syrian Kurds largely stayed out of the protests that shook the country throughout 2011. While there were scattered protests in the Kurdish areas, they subsided rather quickly due to both Kurdish and government reluctance to further inflame the situation (KurdsWatch, 2013). Although in 2011the Assad regime made extraordinary efforts to engage the Kurdish minority, it was refused by the Kurdish public opinion (KurdWatch, 2011).

Throughout 2012 and 2013, there have been few armed clashes in the Kurdish areas of Syria. For a while it appeared that the FSA or other factions have yet to establish a foothold in those areas. Only in late 2013 and in January 2014 were there reports of Kurdish local militias defending local communities against the advances of the al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS (Oweis, 2013).

The most important Kurdish party in Syria is the Democratic Union Party (PYD), established in 2003, although it is not the single political representative of the Kurdish minority. It is a signatory member of the NCC, and although it has a limited role within that coalition and other national Syrian politics, it is considered central to Kurdish affairs. The PYD calls for circumvention of the struggle in Syria and focus on increasing the strength of the Kurdish minority, in order to have a stronger position at the bargaining table at the end of the conflict (KurdsWatch, 2011). Between 2011 and 2014 it largely stayed true to that strategy and in January 2014, it even refused to participate in the Geneva II Peace Conference.

Syrian Salafism

Due to a number of factors, like the fall of the leftist or socialist ideologies in the Arab world and an increase in religious fervor in the Muslim world after 1990, the Salafi ide-

ology had made some advances in the Syrian society in the '90s. With both theological and financial support from the closely related Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia, it spread especially in the poor rural and in tribal areas of Syria, including around Deraa countryside and along the Jordanian frontier, in closest proximity to Saudi Arabia (Lund, 2013).

Salafism tends to be more intolerant than political Islam, but has a weak organizational structure. In Syria most Salafists prefer to focus on preaching and the conversion of other Muslims to their own version of Islam. Also, in Syria there seemed to be an avoidance of political involvement by the Salafists, being focused on their own morality rather than engaging in society (Lund, 2013).

A quick overview of the political factions of the Syrian Opposition shows that, besides the main characteristic of incredible, mind-blowing, divisions that is constantly undergoing, the affiliations, allegiances and divisions are following the main cleavage lines of the Syrian society: secular vs. Islamist vs. socialist vs. nationalist vs. ethnic vs. religious minority. As if these were not enough, another one must be added, a consequence of the repressive nature of the regime, the exiled vs. the internal, domestic opposition.

All of these lines of fracture are present at the same time and almost all Syrian political organizations are constantly oscillating among them. There is no dominant faction among this array of Syrian political denominations. The Muslim Brotherhood of Syria may be the largest and may have the highest prestige, but it is not large enough to dominate the others, and it is itself prone to constant divisions and splits.

Even the international pressures on the exiled opposition to achieve a common front against the Assad regime, either by individual states like Turkey, United States, Saudi Arabia or Qatar, or by supportive coalitions like The Friends of Syria have failed to achieve lasting results. On the contrary, it may have produced additional fracture lines among the various camps backed by different foreign countries with their specific and divergent interests. The latest of these splits is the departure of the Syrian National Council from Syrian National Coalition, in January 2014, as a sign of protest against the Geneva II Conference.

The great majority of these political factions are united by only one idea: the removal of the Assad regime. Beyond it, there are as many visions for Syria's future, as there are factions. But even on this more or less binding goal the opposition cannot agree on how it could be achieved: by national dialogue, by military force, by foreign intervention?

This Syrian predisposition to constant division is probably one of the most important factors that allowed the Assad regime to survive this long. It is most likely that, by playing various factions against each other, the regime will continue to survive, in one form or another.

The Syrian Civil War

The Free Syrian Army (FSA)

Ever since the Assad regime started the crackdown on the protests taking place within Syria by deploying units of the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in April 2011, there were constant reports of defecting soldiers, most of whom refused to fire on protesters. Banding together with civilians with military experience, these small groups represented the first cases of armed opposition against the Assad regime. Their areas of operation spread all across the country, but appeared to be concentrated mostly in the areas near Syria's western borders, specifically Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. These bands attempted to hold territory and sought to establish a safe zone from which to organize and conduct attacks against the regime forces, but were constantly pushed back by the regular SAA units. They managed to succeed in their attacks by forcing regular forces to fight in many places at once and overstretching them.

Using hit-and-run tactics in their attacks against security forces and various regime facilities, their number grew constantly over 2011. Given the disparate inceptions of these armed bands (or gangs as were called by the Assad regime) all throughout Syria, there were numerous attempts of unification of the armed resistance movements and coordination between the units.

First mentions of the FSA are from late July 2011, when a number of high-ranking officers, led by colonel Riad al-Asaad, defected from the SAA and fled into Turkey, from where they announced the formation of the opposition's army, which would fight for the removal of the Assad regime. All throughout 2011 and in early 2012, a large number of defections continued to increase the FSA's strength. Despite these defections, the vast majority of the armed resistance was comprised of civilians with military experience, to which the defectors constituted a significant organizing addition. High-ranking defectors provided the officers' corps for these armed units (Al Jazeera, 2012).

It is important to specify that the FSA announced by colonel Riad al-Asaad was not an organized, hierarchical, rigid, military structure. It was rather a brand name, to which various armed opposition units would adhere, for a number of reasons: affinity with FSA's goals, access to better funding, ammunition or supplies and so on. This approach was the only one possible at the time given the disparate nature of the armed opposition, but it was also to be its main weakness, and prove to be impossible to alleviate. Another important obstacle to increased unification and control was the gap between the formal leadership of the FSA located in Turkey and the field commanders within Syria, which retained complete authority over their forces. As was the case of the exiled political opposition, they were unable to control the combat operations or influence the events inside the country. This resulted into an overall lack of coordination between

the operations of various units, even if they were in the same province, with further consequences of many unsuccessful operations and a general protraction of the civil war.

Within the multitude of armed groups, in spite of their fragmentation and various affiliations, some patterns that allow a better understanding of how this armed opposition is constituted, have surfaced.

The rebel formations, to a certain degree, may be classified into two distinct categories: local battalions and the larger brigades. The first group gravitates towards affiliation with the FSA and accepts the loose coordination of the regional Military Councils. These small units are fighting on a limited geographical area, usually in defense of their own community, seldom ideologically affiliated and are receiving their fundsfrom the FSA Command in Turkey, FSA sponsors or other international benefactors, usually from the GCC countries.

The second group of units, the so-called brigades, are usually led by civilians with military experience, and are often ideological motivated and acknowledge the existence of a private patron, also most often from the GCC countries. These larger brigade units are able to carry out operations in more than one region across Syria and are operating separately from the loose FSA command structure (Levinson, 2012).

Although the cooperation between these two types of rebel units is not excluded, it usually takes form at a small, local level, for a precise tactical objective, and seldom runs deeper. Also, this distinction between the two categories has led to infighting on numerous occasions, and further divisions.

Following the Doha Conference of November 2012 in which the Syrian political opposition was restructured into the Syrian National (or Opposition) Coalition, the FSA also underwent a reorganization. In December 2012, at a conference in Antalya, Turkey, the FSA accepted to be included into the SNC, and created the Supreme Military Command as the official military arm of the SNC. Among the stated goals for this reorganization, we should mention the uniting of forces in order to prevent chaos and disorganization, to push to the sidelines and reduce the influence of the extremist, Jihadist factions, and to prevent these factions from overtaking power centers within Syria (Mroue & Hubbard, 2012).

Despite constant reorganization attempts and increased foreign help towards the FSA over the years, this part of the armed opposition against the Assad regime failed to achieve notable successes on the battlefield. Although in the first few months following the creation of the SMC, the 2013 rebel offensive gained ground against the Assad regime, the FSA was defeated in the Battle of Qusair in May-June 2013, after which it was removed from the spotlights by the ascension of the extremist, al-Qaeda-affiliated groups like Jabhat al-Nusra or the ISIS. In December 2013 it suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of these groups, when its headquarters and military depots in northern

Syria were captured by ISIS after a surprise attack. Many units were routed into Turkey and FSA operations in northern Syria were effectively brought to an end. In these last months, FSA-affiliated units have been undergoing another reorganization process and will probably resume their operations in the spring of 2014.

Besides the extraordinary fragmentation of the armed opposition in Syria which has terrible consequences upon the conduct of the military operations and is considered the prime cause for the slow advances in the war and for its prolongation, there are other explanations for the general poor performance of the FSA and the rise of the violent, extremist factions in the last year.

As was explained above, FSA units' field commanders have almost complete authority over their forces in the field and are only loosely coordinated by the FSA Supreme Military Command. As a consequence of this reality, many such commanders, together with their units, were struggling since the early days to obtain funds, weapons, ammunition and supplies.

A good source of money was found into illegal smuggling of various commodities over the border, usually into Turkey. But as time went by and war dragged on, many of the FSA-affiliated commanders found out that war is a very profitable business. Since 2012 an increased number of reports have been revealing the high corruption and war profiteering of the FSA. From levying tolls at innumerable checkpoints on the roads, to smuggling oil, Syrian ancient artifacts, to corrupt distribution of foodstuffs in the liberated communities, even kidnappings for ransom are just a few of the fundraising sources used by an increasingly corrupt FSA (Sherlock, 2013).

This drift of the "regular" FSA-affiliated units toward profit andpersonal enrichment goes a long way in explaining the rise of the extremist, Jihadist groups in the Syrian civil war. Even though there are no direct reports, given the utter corruption of the FSA it is not inconceivable to assume that a great part of the weapons, ammunition and supplies available toal-Nusra or ISIS comes from the reselling by the FSA of the international aid provided by foreign intelligence agencies.

Syrian state Sponsorship for Terrorism

Early Years of the Cold War

Direct use of terrorism by the Syrian state was often employed under Hafez al-Assad (1970-2000), for a number of reasons: to secure and maintain control and power for the regime within Syria, to assert itself in the Middle East in opposition to Israel or other Arab states and sometimes to serve the interests of its patron and ally USSR.

Given the sectarian nature of the Assad regime in Syria, comprised mostly of the Alawi minority (an offshoot of Shia Islam) and ruling over a resenting Sunni Muslim majority, it is quite easily understood why the regime is aggressive and bellicose, both in

its domestic and foreign policy. The Alawi minority has since the beginning benefited disproportionately from Assad's rule and should it lose power, they fear what the same might happen to them. As such, the regime often used its agents for clandestine operations, involving assassinations of Syrian dissidents, journalists, exiles and so on (Bakri, 2005).

Syrian efforts to oppose Israel, to increase its power and to assert itself in the Middle East were primarily based upon covert means, especially after the military defeats against Israel. Also, attempts to pressure Jordan, Lebanon or the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) were made using direct state terrorism. In Lebanon it helped out to push out US and Israeli troops between 1982 and 1984 and maintained Syrian control over most of the country. It also strengthened the alliance with Iran and Libya and increased its utility vis-à-vis the Soviet Union (Pipes, 1989).

The Syrian state made use of direct terrorism because it allowed actions otherwise not possible to back openly, intimidated opponents, and because it was inexpensive. Until 1986, Syrian agents targeted various moderate Arab officials, Palestinian allies of the PLO, Iraqi officials or Israeli and Jewish persons throughout the world (Byman, 2005).

After its terrorist operations were repeatedly exposed in the mid '80s, the Assad regime stopped using direct terrorist actions and relied heavily upon various proxies, in the form of external terrorist groups, to do its dirty work, while also restraining its operations to the Middle East. This moved away the spotlight from the regime, lowered the political costs of such actions, allowed the regime to plausibly deny knowledge of the terrorist attacks and avoided potential military strikes (U.S. Department of State, 1986).

The Syrian relationship with the Palestinian resistance was built during the leadership of Hafez al-Assad (1970-2000). It is likely that Hafez al-Assad decided to make use of the terrorist means used by the Palestinians against Israel because the regular military confrontation has proven to be a losing option too many times. Israel military victories against Syria in 1967, 1973 and 1982 proved without a doubt that Syria could not use conventional leverage against Israel.

In order for Syria to achieve its strategic goals, the return of the Golan Heights and a possible reconciliation with Israel, other means were necessary, and Palestinians were ready and waiting for opportunities to strike back at Israel. In addition to these realpolitik reasons, there was probably also an ideological commitment for the Palestinian cause, as can be ascertained from many of Assad's speeches, where he accepts the use of terrorist means for the "struggle against occupation, carried out by the national liberation movement" (Ganor, 1991).

Based upon these objectives, Syria began offering support to a number of Palestinian organizations, such as: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command, the Democratic Front for the

Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Struggle Front, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas and so on (State, 2008). These organizations established and maintained offices in Damascus throughout the years, for political and informational activities, according to Damascus. After the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Syria also began aiding either directly, or by funneling Iranian help, the Hezbollah organization (Shatz, 2004).

Besides helping these Palestinian organizations in their actions against Israel, Syria tried to make use of them in its rivalry with the neighboring countries. For example, it engaged the services of the Abu Nidal Organization to attack Jordanian officials in Europe and pressure King Hussein to withdraw from negotiations with Israel and the PLO (Byman, 2005).

With all the benefits that supporting the Palestinian cause against Israel or its Arab neighbors brought Syria, this was a double-edged sword. Their attacks against Israel always carried the danger of sparking another losing war for Syria. Moreover, Arab enthusiasm for their struggle could have inflamed the public opinions in the Arab countries, including Syria, pressuring their regimes towards action or leading to revolts against their leaders. These outcomes would have been disastrous for Syria, and so the Assad regime tried as much as possible to control the Palestinian cause and also to use it to increase its internal legitimacy (Hinnebusch, 2001).

Syrian support for the Palestinian terrorist organizations continued even after the end of the Cold War and despite the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian peace process. After the 1991 Madrid Conference, a number of Syrian-based Palestinian organizations established the "Ten Front" in Damascus in order to oppose the peace talks (Shaul, 2000).

This continued support was used by the Syrian regime even in its peace talks with Israel, in order to extract border concessions or to ensure that it was not excluded from the table. According to the U.S. Department of State, in 2006 President Bashar al-Assad "expressed public support for Palestinian terrorist groups", while the Syrian government provides "security escorts for their motorcades" (State, 2008).

One of the reasons for this continuity, besides the affinity with the Palestinian cause and opposition to Israel, must be searched in the strength and credibility (or the lack thereof) of the new Syrian leader. The rush with which Bashar was promoted into senior governmental positions by his father did not allow him to build authority and credibility within Syria.These weaknesses meant that a radical shift from the previous policies would have exposed the regime to internal criticism and prove dangerous for the regime's survival. A pragmatic strategy for regime's survival thus required a continuity of the earlier approaches (International Crisis Group, 2004).

The main state institution involved in covert terrorist operations was the Syrian Air Force Intelligence, under the command of Major General Muhammad al Khawli, which reported directly to Hafez al-Assad. This organization directed the individuals involved

in terrorist operations, trained them, offered them weapons, forged documents and so on, through the military attachés at the Syrian embassies (Ganor, 1991).

To summarize, Syria entered the new millennium with a powerful and decades long legacy of using and supporting terrorism in various forms, either by its own secret agents, or by relying on external organizations which were prone to use terrorist means for their objectives. This legacy included a significant covert infrastructure for creating and sustaining international terrorist networks.

Although Syria had signed various international documents and treaties for combating terrorism and suppressing the financing of terrorism, their implementation was by the year 2000 well behind schedule (Middle East & North Africa Financial Action Task Force, 2006). This reluctance to implement the international treaties for combating terrorism is probably based upon the pragmatic, domestic, requirements of the Syrian regime, the advantages of possessing such an instrument in negotiations with Israel, pressuring Syria's neighbors and, to a degree, to real ideological belief in aiding the Palestinian cause.

Transition to a radical and Islamic Fundamentalism-based Terrorism

After the ending of the Cold War and the start and advancements of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, various Palestinian or Arab terrorist organizations with a leftist/Marxist or nationalistic ideology slowly began to fade away and give ground to a more deadly form of international terrorism, which was not defined in terms of left/right, or Marxist/Communist vs. Capitalist/Imperialist dichotomies, but aspired to unite the Muslim world against the Western world and sought to establish a new Islamic Caliphate.

The roots of this new type of ideological motivation must be searched in a number of places: a new order governing the international system after the Cold War, a cultural-based rejection of the Western values, the rise of political Islam, and the religious foundations of Jihad, to name just a few. All these causes, among many others, combined during the last decades and culminated in the current phenomenon of international terrorism based on radical Islam, of which the most prominent exponents were Osama bin-Laden and his infamous al-Qaeda.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the intricacies of the new paradigm of Islamic-based international terrorism of the last decades. Nevertheless, we shall try to explore some of the causes, which, we believe, are significant for our study, of the rise of this new and dangerous global phenomenon.

First of all, the contemporary ideology of Jihadismis based upon the last century phenomenon of political Islam, which can be traced back to the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928, the very first structured and organized form of Islamic fundamentalism (Mitchell, 1969).

The "Essay on Jihad" by the Muslim Brotherhood founder, Hasan al-Banna, was later developed by Sayyid Qutb, a foremost Egyptian thinker of political Islam and a prominent ideological founder of Islamism. The "neo-Jihad" concepts of al-Banna were expanded by Qutb in a quasi-Marxist vision of "Jihad as a permanent Islamic world revolution" (Euben, 1999). This revolution seeks to establish "God's rule on a global basis", and thus serves as the foundation for an alternate international systemic order which will replace the Westphalian system of the present day world. This claim of universalism transforms the ideology of Jihadism into something different than a mere religious extremism which adopts violent means. It seeks to offer a conceptual order for the world.

The general concept of Islamism, or political Islam, can be divided into three major dimensions: institutionalized Islamism, Salafism and Jihadism. All of them emerge from the same politicization of religion met throughout the Muslim world, but are fundamentally different. The institutionalized Islamism believes in achieving its goals of a Sharia-based society and state through participation in the democratic institutionalized process. Salafism draws its roots from the Middle Ages jurisprudence, and asserts the *salaf*, meaning the first Muslim community, as the most important model for contemporary Muslims to follow. In this respect, Salafists consider divergences from this first, genuine model, as a heresy, with subsequent extreme hostility towards perceived heretical Islamic sects (Shia Islam or Alawites for example). The Jihadism, on the other hand, is akin to violent actions, also known as "terror in the mind of God". Its subsequent ideology of global Jihad is built upon a particular Islamist interpretation of religious Islamic doctrines, which predicates terrorist actions with religious arguments (Juergensmeyer, 2000).

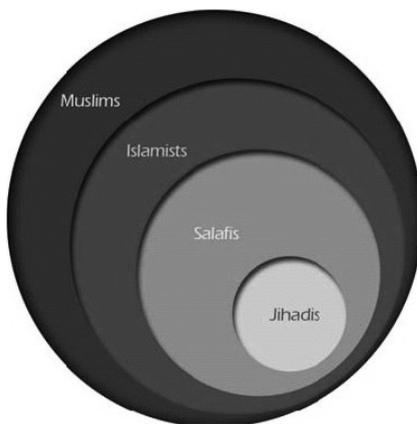The evolution of the political Islam through Salafism and towards Jihadism offers an incomplete image if takenout of context. Another process that needs to be considered is the so-called "Revolt against the West", a self-assertive, cultural movement directed against the secularism of Western values (Bull, 1984). Islamism tries to de-secularize the character of world politics, which relates to the concept of civilizational struggle, or conflict, because these two perspectives of secular against non-secular belong to different civilizational worldviews and conflicting political visions of the world (Huntington, 1996).

Figure 1. Militant Ideology Atlas
Source: therevealer.or

Also to be considered is the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. This event collapsed the existing international sys-

temic order and eliminated one of the two main competing systems of thought. This intellectual vacuum allowed the ideology of Islamism to gain ground in the Muslim world and to present itself as the main alternative to the new liberal democracy model of governance (Fukuyama, 1992). In this context, the successful Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, together with the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan by the religiously motivated Afghan resistance, boosted the religious fervor all across the Muslim world and further aided the spread of political Islamism, Salafism and violent Jihadism.

As these militant ideologies made their way into the post-Cold War era, a well-established Syrian security apparatus, accustomed to covert terrorist operations and working, aiding and making use of individuals ready to execute such actions, was ready for this new trend. What was needed for a new marriage of convenience between Syria and Islamic terrorism was the willingness of the Assad regime to once again make use of aiding and sponsoring terrorism to expand Syrian interests, and, more importantly, an opportunity. This opportunity would come after the US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Syrian aid for Destabilization of Iraq, 2003-2007

Since the last days of Saddam regime, foreign fighters wishing to oppose the US forces were present in Iraq, and some of them, especially Syrians, were received with open arms (RAND Corporation, 2008). Although in tiny proportion when compared with the Iraqi insurgents, their numbers grew constantly over the years. Although probably not all of them were Jihadists, after the establishment of al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2004, many foreigners became dependent on the terrorist group and subsequently adhered to its ideology and joined it (Gambill, 2004).

It is probable that the Syrian government at first did not provide help for those Syrian citizens to go into Iraq and fight against the US-led Coalition forces. Considering the over 700-kilometer-long desert and the desolate frontier between the two countries, illegal crossings were difficult to prevent. But as time progressed, and relations between the United States and Syria, marked with repeated accusations of Syria supporting terrorist organizations like Hezbollah or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, grew poorer, it is likely that the Syrian regime eventually agreed to overlook these crossings, when not supporting them openly (Wilson, 2004).

The range of support offered by Syria to the various anti-US insurgents in Iraq respected the pattern of the previous decades, meaning that it was done in a manner that provided a certain degree of deniability. This was achieved most of the times by acting as a "passive supporter", aiding the Baathist elements of the previous regime in Iraq by aensuring weak control of its borders or of its territory. This attitude allowed the organization and control of some of the Iraqi insurgency from Syria, with almost no interference from the Assad regime.

In addition to these actions by the former Baathist Iraqi officials, by 2004, Syria had also turned into an important transit point for foreign funds and fighters flocking to Iraq. Even more than a simple transit point, Syria also served as a logistical base of operations for al-Qaeda affiliated militants, as early as 2003, with fundraising operations and recruits' deployment being coordinated, covertly or not, from Damascus (Rotella, 2003). It is believed that two al-Qaeda-affiliated organizations, Ansar al-Islam and the Islamic State of Iraq (the precursor of the present ISIS) benefitted the most from the "Syria connection" (Mauro, 2009).

These activities, tolerated or encouraged by the Assad regime, were not considered essential for the survival of the Iraqi insurgency, of which the foreign fighters were only a small part, but they enhanced the opposition against the US and made it more difficult to counter (MacFarquhar, 2004).

This tolerance for the transit of foreign fighters to Iraq and the aid of the Syrian banking system for transferring funds towards the Iraqi insurgency led to US pressures on Syria to curb these activities during meetings between US delegations and the Assad regime (Wilson, 2004). The inconclusive nature of these talks eventually determined the Bush administration to impose sanctions on Syria, first in 2004, then again in 2006 (Embassy of the United States, Damascus, Syria).

In its support for the Iraqi insurgency, Syria walked a fine line between obstructive and constructive actions. While undisputedly there was anopen tolerance by the Assad regime for the organization and control of the insurgency from inside Syria and overt aid for the foreign fighters, Damascus also tried to avoid raising Washington's anger and limit the scope of its policies. When the US pressure increased, at the end of 2004, Syria handed it a number of insurgent leaders, among which were Saddam Hussein's half-brother and another 29 former Baathist officials (Tyson, 2005).

In its efforts to complicate the US mission in Iraq, the Assad regime, alarmed that it might be the target of the next regime change operation, tolerated, when not outright supported the flow of foreign fighters towards Iraq and their fundraising and recruitment operations within the country. While at the same time there was fear that the Islamist unrest in Iraq might spillover in Syria, it was impossible to comb through the individuals crossing the border and discern among their motivations. A combination of administrative border corruption, lack of authority for Bashar al-Assad's regime, and covert security apparatus dealings with the border infiltrations meant that Jihadist presence in Syria was well established throughout the last decade.

As the coalition counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq began to be more successful in 2007-2009, the transit of the foreign Jihadist fighters through Syria towards Iraq began to subside. However, the presence of Jihadist-affiliated individuals, together with a five-year long build-up of smuggling networks was, most likely, not removed from Syria.

Proof that the Syrian regime was playing with an Islamist fire that could always blow up in its face was the fact that throughout the first decade of the 21st century there were a number of terrorist attacks within Syria, against Western targets (US Embassy in Damascus, UN facilities), state institutions, and religious minorities sites. The Syrian regime blamed Islamists for the attacks in almost all cases (BBC News, 2006).

As the decade drew to an end andSyria was about to face the first tremors of the Arab Spring, the decades-long state support for terrorism was well established within the Assad regime, almost an organic part of the government. On the other hand, the legacy of the Iraqi insurrection and Syrian mingling in it was that there was now a significant presence of Jihadism in Syria, both in the form of smuggling networks, radicalized individuals and, what is more important, in the form of violent and terrorism-prone Jihadist ideology (Levitt, 2010).

Syrian Support for Terrorism in 2012

In the beginning of 2012 the Syrian regime released Abu Musab al-Suri, a top Jihadist ideologue and a high-ranking al-Qaeda operative. He was a long time fighter against the Assad regime, having fought in 1979-1982 Muslim Brotherhood uprising. He was also considered to be the mastermind behind the July 2005 London bombings and was in Syrian custody since 2005 (Haaretz, 2012).

It was believed that the release of al-Suri, allegedly together with other militants, some of them formerly affiliated to al-Qaeda in Iraq, was meant either as a willingness to resort again to acts of terrorism as a foreign policy tool, or to reinforce the government's own narrative that it is fighting terrorism. Later reports of Lebanese authorities discovering a Syrian terrorist plot seemed to reinforce the first alternative (Reuters, 2012).

Conclusion

The current Islamist-based, Salafist or Jihadist and al-Qaeda-linked opposition and rebel movements and organizations present in Syria that are fighting the Assad regime may indeed contain foreign fighters that have been attracted in opposing the "heretics", but it is important to understand that these are only a small minority. The great majority of the "terrorists" from the regime's narrative are radicalized Syrians that found no other alternative.

At the beginning of the Syrian Revolution, in March 2011, it was not a foregone conclusion that there was going to be a civil war, or that violent Salafist groups would become the mainstay of the anti-Assad resistance. But structural conditions within the Syrian opposition, in both its political and armed forms, have created the circumstances that, over the course of three years, made the rise of the extremist and violent Islam unavoidable.

The constant divisions within the Syrian political opposition, divided over a staggering number of fault lines and incapable of achieving only small resemblances of unity

meant that there was no political ideology or vision for the future of Syria capable of offering an alternative to the one presented by Assad. This meant that there was an empty ideological space that was eventually filled with the extremist Islamist ideologies.

On the other hand, the unimpressive performances of the armed opposition in the form of the Free Syrian Army meant that the armed conflict with the regime would continue for a long time. Although capable of achieving some successes, the FSA proved incapable of being the right solution for the armed overthrow of the regime. This military failure, when combined with a structural predisposition for divisions, splits and infighting on the part of the FSA and its slow transformation from a revolutionary force into a corrupt and hated collection of local warlords along the last two years, meant that armed alternatives to the FSA would also have to be created.

Another important aspect is the predisposition showed by the Syrian state to make use of foreign terrorist organizations as a tool of foreign policy. The constant, decades-long cultivation of terrorism and terrorists, sometimes of the most dangerous kind, inside the country meant that the operational foundations of Jihadist groups, radicalized individuals, recruitment and training facilities and smuggling networks for fundraising were laid ready to be used, should the need arise. When the revolution arrived, some of these groups either had their ties with the security apparatus severed, or shifted their allegiance to the Revolution and began fighting against the "heretical" regime.

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AN OVERVIEW
ON JAPAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Alexandra MIHALI

Abstract.*This paper offers an overview of Japan's National Security Strategy. In doing so, it analyzes the controversy concerning Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and the current geopolitical concerns in the Asia-Pacific. In light of these factors, the paper wants to present the general provisions of the defense strategy, hoes does it respond to the actual threats in the area and what innovation does it bring.*

Keywords: *Japan, security strategy, United States, Russia, China, North Korea, internal balancing, external balancing, defensive realism, deterrence, proactive contribution to peace, collective self-defense.*

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On December 17th, 2013, Japan approved the first National Security Strategy (NSS) in the country's history. It is interesting to explore the possible reasons that may have determined the Japanese leadership to contemplate the necessity of such a document, considering the fact that Japan managed its national defense for 50 years without one. Releasing this defense strategy is in itself a novelty to Japan's international politics. The NSS did not come alone, as it was accompanied by other two important documents: The National Defense Program Outline and the Mid-Term Defense Plan. The National Security Strategy explains the overall foreign policy strategy, promising proactive peace, and outlines a clear intention of alignment with other maritime democracies and states in the Pacific. The defense document completes the security strategy and points to a 1.7% increase in defense ex-

penditure per year and a shift towards air and naval capabilities (Green, 2013). In the meantime, Prime Minister Abe launched Japan's first National Security Council (Martin, 2013), which has the purpose of acting as a "control tower" in the implementation of this new security strategy.

Constitutional controversy

All these changes in Japan's defense policy come at a time when there have been many debates on the constitution of Japan and, in particular, on Article 9. Over the course of following few months after assuming office, Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe vowed to amend the Japanese Constitution, especially the famous peace clause through which the country renounced the possibility of war as a means of settling international disputes and prohibits the presence of armed forces and other war potential; it also renounced threat or use of force as a sovereign right in order to "maintain international peace and security" (Logos, 2013). After World War II, many nations included peace clauses in their constitutions. Article 26 of the German constitution, drafted in 1948, states that "acts tending to and undertaken with intent to disturb the peaceful relations between nations, especially to prepare for a war of aggression, shall be unconstitutional" (Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, 2010). Italy similarly "rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples, and as a means for the settlement of international disputes" in Article 11 of its post-war constitution (Constitution of the Italian Republic, 1947). Japan's Article 9 however goes much further than the others:

> 1. *Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means to settle international disputes.*
>
> 2. *In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.*

These paragraphs of the Japanese Constitution leave the country heavily reliant on the alliance with the United States for self-defense, and, at the same time, weaker than its neighbors. The reinterpretation of Article 9 most likely wants to allow for collective self-defense between allied nations (The Japan News, 2014). This principle actually tackles the use of force in response to an armed attack on another nation. Article 9 outlaws war as a means of settling international disputes, but does not strictly proscribe the right of collective self-defense. Abe would like to eventually revise Article 9 itself, but has settled for the more practical goal of revising collective-self-defense, a process set in motion by the last DPJ leader, Yoshiniko Noda.

With the right of collective self-defense expanded, Japan will be able to participate with fewer constraints in UN peacekeeping operations and come to the assistance of UN

forces under attack, become a more reliant ally of the United States and explore new areas of defense cooperation with states like Australia. Grey areas will still remain, but the Self-Defense Forces will be seen by allies, partners, and potential adversaries as a more effective fighting force (Green, 2013).

The NSS can be seen as a completion to the intention of the Prime Minister to amend the Constitution. As it defines the nation's survival, through its views on the relations with other states such as the United States, China, Russia, North Korea, India, and through its adding a new military component to the mix, the security document may want to restore Japan's influence in the Asia-Pacific and strengthen alliances with key partners, by proving it is a nation able to stand up for itself.

Geopolitical Concerns in the Asia-Pacific

Japan finds itself in a time filled with geopolitical concerns. The long-awaited rise of China has arrived with growth in defense expenditures and determination to solve territorial disputes. These factors are shaping the perception of China as a threat more than a partner (IPF, 2013). In 2013, this superpower came in second on the global list for military spending. With a military expenditure of 166 billion, almost 10 percent of the global investment (Rosen, 2014), and adding this to the more than one million active military personnel, China can become the most powerful global force, if properly equipped. This is not a problem in itself, but when seen in connection to their determination to solve territorial disputes such as the Senkaku islands, caution is not unjustified.

The relation between Japan and China must be understood in the light of their history. Since 1895, when China suffered a bitter defeat to Japan in the Sino-Japanese War, animosity has blighted relations between two of Asia's most powerful nations. History shows that Japan has played the role of imperial aggressor and, as of 1854, opened itself to international trade and western influence, which lead to greater economic power, hence greater military sway. China, by contrast, was until the late twentieth-century little more than an economic backwater and the whipping boy of Japan: the latter invaded China again during the 1930s through Manchuria and left in its wake a path of devastation. The massacre of hundreds of thousands during the "Raping of Nanking" in 1937 sears the memories of many in China still. Conflict, it seems, has never been far away between the two (IPF, 2013). Similar tensions continue to play out today in relation to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. According to China, the islands belong to them as Japan lost them after World War II. Japan, however, considers the islands to be part of the Okinawa chain and say that they were unclaimed until they were "discovered" by Japan in 1884. Moreover, in 2013, the government of Japan bought three of the islands. The official position of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared the islands as being "owned" by the state, hence they are Japanese territory.

At the same time, the United States has made efforts to strengthen its position in the Asia-Pacific through the „rebalance towards Asia" policy, also commonly known as the „American pivot to Asia". This policy consists of a shift in the focus of foreign policy from the Middle East to the Far East, in order to balance the growing influence of China and the North Korean threat. The United States has recognized China's growing geopolitical importance and has made decisive actions to strengthen its position, through balancing and engaging with China. More than this, President Barack Obama named the US a "Pacific nation", further stressing the importance of the "rebalance policy" and of the Asia-Pacific area. New security agreements, for instance with Australia, are proof of this new American policy (Global Times, 2011).

In view of all this, Japan's strategic position is troublesome; however, it must try to maintain good relations with both China and the United States. The new security strategy appears to be launched in this direction: to support the "US pivot" and to deal with a rising China.

North Korea is still unpredictable and considered a major nuclear threat. The country has already carried three nuclear tests and has added uranium enrichment capabilities to its pre-existing stock of weapons-grade plutonium. North Korea also has an extensive Chemical Weapons program which is seen as a risk to Japan and the region (Miller, 2013). In 2002, the two countries signed an agreement called the Pyongyand Declaration through which both countries promised they would make every possible effort for an early normalization of the relations. The pact essentially covered the full gamut of issues, including the abduction issue, Japanese colonialism from World War II, and the North's missile tests and nuclear weapons program (Miller, 2013).

The Russian-Japanese relations are uncertain due to the territorial disputes and the lack of a peace treaty post World War II. In the past year, the two countries have benefited from high-level contacts, as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met with Putin on multiple occasions. Also, Japan and Russia held their first-ever "2+2" meeting, at which their foreign and defense ministers discussed security cooperation. Although the meeting failed to make headlines, it was a significant step, given that Japan has held similar meetings only with the United States and Australia. For Russia, this was its first "2+2" meeting with an Asian country. In spite of these recent developments, Russia and Japan are hardlypartners. Although apparently willing to cooperate, the territorial dispute of the Kuril Islands and the lack of a peace treaty will be challenges on the road to a security partnership (Pourzitakis, 2014).

In addition to these geopolitical concerns, there seems to be a trend of "normalization" in the East Asian countries. In other words, each state is striving to become a "normal country", which means they are unsatisfied with their current status (Wang, 2014). This normality may differ from one country to another. Whether it means reunification, democratization, or eradicating constitutional limitations, the trend is present. For the

two Koreas, "normal" spells reunification. The Taiwanese are debating whether to seek independence to become a "normal country" or to reintegrate with the mainland in some way in the future and restore a "Great China" status. As for Japan, being a "normal country" refers to abolishing the still-valid constitutional limits on military development and playing a more "symmetric" role in world economic and political spheres. For many Japanese, this concept also means that Japan would no longer live in the shadow of history and it would have a normal, as opposed to apologetic, relationship with its Asian neighbors. However, many Japanese fail to realize that this process of normalization implies a reconciliation of Japan's self-image with the images its neighbors' hold of Japan's past (Wang, 2014). In the case of China, being a "normal country" may be synonym with democratization, but China's new leader, Xi Jinping, has repeatedly emphasized that China's main future objective is to realize national "rejuvenation". This concept refers to a return to greatness or a past glory. As we can see, China and Japan both want a "rejuvenation", but through different means.

"Normalization" can be linked to the search for identity. Even though China and Japan are now the world's second and third largest economies, neither one has yet fully completed its nation building. They still have major internal disagreements regarding the evaluation of their past and the objectives of their future. The question is whether East Asian countries will be able to follow their dreams of being "normal" without getting in each-other's way and, more than this, if the situation between these countries is also an identity-based conflict (because it already is an interest-based conflict). There are arguments to support this statement; for instance, both China and Japan consider themselves peace-loving and the other aggressive (Wang, 2014). This raises even more concern to the geopolitical situation in the Asia-Pacific.

General Provisions of the Security Strategy

There are several reasons why Japan formulated this document. First of all, a possible cause could be the lack of unity that neighboring ASEAN is experiencing and the lack of common political decisions that could have put Japan in a position to stand out in security policy terms. This comes of course with a reformulation of interests on the international arena. Also, in the context of all the disputes that are characterizing the Far East, Japan apparently feels the need to play an important role in maintaining the security of the area, in other terms besides economics. The important point here is that Abe's security agenda is not all that different from the general trajectory set by his predecessors in the post-Cold War era. It actually represents continuity, rather than change (Green, 2013).

A 2013 analysis of the Lowy Institute for International Policy explains that states facing a decline in their power relative to other countries have had three options: "bandwagoning" with the rising power, "internal balancing" (which means increasing their own mili-

tary strength) or "external balancing" (aligning with other similarly threatened states). After the Cold War, many international scholars were expecting Japan to bandwagon with China, but this did not occur. Instead, Japan opted for a combination of the remaining two strategies, internal and external balancing. Under Abe, both have accelerated.

Japan's options for "internal balancing" in order to balance a rising China are limited. The basis of this nation's power is the economy, and this seems to be very well understood by the Abe government (Green, 2013). The Japanese Prime Minister is trying to revive the country's economy using "Abenomics", a blend of reflation, stimulus, and reform, in order to restore it after 20 years of stagnation (The Economist, 2014). The strategy is built around "three arrows" and the first two gave quick economic and therefore political results. The third arrow, if it works, will gain more political pay-off, but this will take more time. But Abe has more control over the traditional military instruments of the state than he does over the economy. Although Japan has highly capable military forces, Abe's ability to keep up with military advances made by other states is limited by budgetary factors. The Mid Term Defense Plan declares a 1.7 percent annual growth, but this is not a significant increase. So, with relevant budget growth and new military expenditures unlikely, the area of internal balancing which is more appealing seems to be the institutional and legal reform in the area of national security and defense. The country's deterrent capabilities are seen to be less credible, given the constitutional and legal constraints that have accumulated after World War II. So at the core of Abe's strategy appears to lay the removal of these constraints and the creation of a normal democratic national security state.

These reforms in national security institutions and policies will not necessarily lead to great quantitative change in Japan's national power, but they are likely to have significant qualitative impact on the future, as many of the reforms began before Abe came to power, which suggests support from both Chinese parties for the strategy launched in December (Green, 2013).

Concerning "external balancing", Abe has been the most energetic Prime Minister of all Japan's post-war diplomats, as in the first ten months of his mandate, he travelled to more than 20 countries and held more than 100 high level meetings. The most interesting thing about his diplomacy is that it has been focused on the near and far abroad rather than the immediate neighbors South Korea and China. Mostly, the lack of dialogue with these countries is due to historical and territorial disputes. But this preference in diplomacy also reflects the view that Japan's natural partners are the democratic maritime states. Emphasizing efforts to strengthen Japan-Australia and Japan-India relations during his first term in office, Abe is now trying to boost relations with Southeast Asia and Russia. In Southeast Asia, Abe has visited all the 10 member states of ASEAN in less than a year and has made clear his concerns about the Chinese threat in the South China Sea. Also, he has leased 10 Japanese coast guard vessels to

the Philippines and dispatched more than 1000 personnel to assist with the recovery of the Philippines from Typhoon Haiyan (Euronews, 2013). He has also visited Russia with the occasion of the G20 Leaders' Summit in the autumn of 2013. He has agreed to start diplomatic talks with President Vladimir Putin in order to address territorial issues (Green, 2013).

There are three formally stated objectives of the security strategy, but the first two are more relevant, and they can be linked to the "internal/external balancing" detailed above. The first objective details Japan's focus on "deterrence". In order to maintain peace and security, Japan must dissuade the emergence of any threat to its security. It appears to be the main strategic view that this document proposes. This objective has an action-oriented approach also, meaning that if the deterrence strategy does not work, one of the objectives is, obviously, to defeat the probable threat. At a first glance, it seems reasonable if we consider the second stated objective.

This second objective is directed to further strengthening Japan's relations with the United States. The alliance is, without a doubt, highly relevant for Japan. By having a strong relation with the United States, Japan will be able to "strengthen the deterrence necessary for maintaining peace" (NSS, 2013). The idea is that other international actors, such as China, must have the impression that if they are aggressive towards Japan, they are aggressive towards the United States. And, that if they launch an attack on Japan, they attack the United States also.

Now, the US and Japanese forces are integrated on missile, anti-submarine warfare and other missions in such a way that China must assume that any military escalation would trigger a joint US-Japan response. But as the US-Japan alliance does not have any formal joint and combined command like NATO or US-ROK alliance, the security strategy tries to further strengthen that relation.

However, this is not all. If we look at Washington's actions in the Asia-Pacific in the last few years, the most prominent issue that arises is the "Rebalance towards Asia". The American "pivot" to Asia became a popular buzzword after the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton authored in 2011 the article "America's Pacific Century", in Foreign Policy Magazine. The 'pivot' strategy, according to Clinton, is designed to proceed along six courses of action: strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening America's relationships with rising powers, including China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights. In the light of these courses of action, a possible interpretation of Japan's National Security Strategy could be a reinforcement of this American policy (2011). On the one hand, there is the United States that declared, at the end of 2011, its views and strategy in the Far East, and on the other hand, Japan, America's most important ally in the area, released a document seemingly in support

of this strategy. Moreover, it is for the first time since the end of World War II that Japan has referred in any way to a possible military component of their security strategy. Although not very clearly, the NSS states that if a threat should arise, it must be defeated, and this defeat is most probably understood in military terms. As we have previously explained, the Japanese leadership is trying to revive the economy of the country. But in a time when China is expanding (especially increasing military expenditures) at a point of becoming a possible threat, the United States is situated in between its ally Japan and its main geopolitical focus in the Asia-Pacific, China. The interesting issue here is if the US were to choose at some point between the two countries. It seems Japan believes that in order to maintain its alliance with America, the country has to be able to stand for itself. So, without dropping its disengagement policy adopted post war, Japan is trying through this objective to mitigate this policy, more likely because the economic policies seem insufficient at the moment. So, for the first time in seven decades, Japan seems to be considering the importance of the military component in its security strategy, which is in accordance with the "external balancing" policy.

Prime Minister Abe's actions in the last months may be considered in support of this vision. He has managed to create a National Security Council and to draft a defense strategy. Also, a debate about Japan's constitution, shaped during the American occupation, will be launched in a nearby future. Its Article 9 renounces warfare and the threat or use of force, and is the reason why Japan cannot act as other countries do in similar situations. Chances are that Article 9 will be "reinterpreted" in order to allow Japan to join the fight (The Economist, 2014).

Also, the document states the importance of a "proactive contribution to peace" that Japan wants to have in the region. In the past decades, the defense strategy of Japan was characterized by a reexamination of the relationship between justice and war under the name of humanitarian intervention. This aspect of humanitarian aid is found in the strategy document, but the issue of proactive contribution to peace is strengthened by the emphasis put on alliances with key states such as the US, the possible military component (Ito, 2007), and the right to collective self-defense.

The strategy defines Japan's survival in terms of maritime, energy, space, and cyberspace security policies. Defining one's survival in these terms is a realistic approach. More than this, and important to be mentioned, the domestic policy of Japan is influencing its foreign policy and security strategy in a way best explained by the concept of defensive realism. This concept assumes that a state's pursuit to increased stability and security results in greater instability because the other states (opponents) will respond to this action (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The National Security Strategy also emphasizes the protection of the sea lines of communication (SLOC). Because Japan is a giant energy consumer, heavily dependent on natural

and energy resources from the Middle East, this issue is of the utmost importance. As a course of action, Japan will provide assistance for the countries alongside these sea routes by enhancing their maritime law enforcement capabilities and strengthen cooperation with partners who share similar strategic interests with Japan. Special emphasis is placed on the relation with India, as the country is "in the center of the sea lines of communication, being of geopolitical importance for Japan" (JNSS, 2013; Laird, 2014).

All these aspects concerning the meaning of the National Security Strategy of Japan are even more relevant if we look at Japan's stance with some of its neighbors.

In the last years, the relations between China and Japan have not been warm, which explains why Japan's security strategy is predominantly focused on China. The primary driver for Japanese strategic thinking over the past years has been China. With more than $300 billion in bilateral trade and $13.5 billion in Japanese investment in China, this economic interdependence serves as a restraint for conflict. In terms of trades and larger investments however, Tokyo and Beijing need each other less. Japanese trade with China has fallen up to 7 points in 10 years, while Japanese exports to the ASEAN economies have risen significantly in the same period. This relative shift away from China could reflect Japanese frustration with Chinese labor costs, anti-Japanese demonstrations and poor rule of law (Green, 2013).

On the political and security side, Sino-Japanese relations have reached a low point. Japanese military defense white papers have been more and clearer concerning the rising Chinese military threat each year. This is due to the fact that since 2009, China has increased the deployment of maritime security ships to disputed territories like the Senkaku islands (Green, 2013). Also, let us not forget the latest developments concerning China's ADIZ that poisoned the relations between the two countries. The announcement of this new "Air Defense Identification Zone" was issued on November 23rd last year by China's defense ministry, while claiming that its enforcement was in immediate effect. The problem is that China's ADIZ overlaps with similar zones maintained by Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, and covers widely contested territories with these neighbors. While China' ADIZ provocation has not been necessarily the main trigger for Japan's NSS, it certainly was an accelerating factor. Also, the actions that Japan is able to undertake in the event of a Chinese challenge to Japan's claim of Senkaku are highly controversial. The Japanese Constitution allows Japan to respond to any direct threat against its people and territorial integrity. The controversy is whether the Senkaku islands are seen as Japanese territory or not. The official position of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Japan stipulates that the islands are "owned" by the country (MOFA, 2012). If "owned" means in fact the islands are part of the territory, and it appears to be so considering Japan's actions, then a Chinese attack can trigger a response of the "owner". If not, Japan is not allowed by the Constitution to respond in any way to a Chinese occupation of the disputed islets as they are not a recognized territory of the state.

As the new security strategy guidelines note, "China has been rapidly advancing its military capabilities in a wide range of areas through its continued increase in its military budget without sufficient transparency". The document also criticizes Beijing for its aggressive actions in the East and South China Seas, insisting that they are "incompatible with the existing order of international law" (Foreign Affairs, 2014). Japan's strategy likely intends to demonstrate that Chinese coercion will not lead to Japanese compromise (Green, 2013).

Furthermore, China and the Senkaku islands are not Japan's only concern. North Korea is still unpredictable under the leadership of Kim Jong Un and is considered to be a major nuclear threat. Japan already has some missile defense systems, along with South Korea, (Mullen, 2013) to thwart the DPRK's menace, but the NSS makes provisions for the upgrade of the existing capabilities and for the acquisition of new ones. Concerning this issue, the new strategy specifies that Japan will cooperate closely with its allies to urge North Korea to take actions towards its denuclearization.

Last but not least, Japan's relations with Russia are not very good either. The two countries have been unable to sign a peace treaty after World War II due to territorial disputes. There is an ongoing quarrel between Japan and the Russian Federation over sovereignty of the South Sakhalin and Kuril Islands. They were occupied by Soviet forces towards the end of the Second World War, and are currently under Russian administration as South Kuril District of the Sakhalin Oblast, but are claimed by Japan, which refers to them as the Northern Territories. In the strategy, Japan points out the importance of cooperation with Russia in all areas, in accordance with the "external balancing" concept, and stresses out that it will begin negotiations concerning the Northern territories with the purpose of signing a peace treaty (The Wall Street Journal, 2013). This issue was previously encountered in September 2013, in the official talks between Shinzo Abe and Vladimir Putin.

In addition to these particular issues with Japan's neighbors, they are sharing one common aggravating controversy. Constant visits by government officials to Yasukuni Shrine are unhelpful and detrimental for the country's ties with its neighbors. In December 2013, Abe visited the shrine where Japanese leaders, convicted as war criminals by an Allied tribunal after World War II, are honored along with those who died in battle. This act has infuriated China and South Korea, both of which were occupied by Japanese forces until the end of the war, and prompted concern from the United States about deteriorating ties between the Asian neighbors (The Guardian, 2013).

Considering all this, the National Security Strategy tries to address every one of these issues, putting emphasis on strong alliances, proactive contribution to peace and the deterrence of possible threats.

Conclusions

As Shinzo Abe declared almost a year ago at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, "Japan is back". The set of measures proposed by the National Security Strategy appear to be coherent and might ensure that Japan remains a "tier one" player in the Asia-Pacific. On the one hand, the Prime Minister is demonstrating a firmness that can be useful on the international arena and, on the other hand, the fact that his security strategy is based on previous work of the Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Japan is a sign that the strategy is backed in the country (Green, 2013).

There are still many factors that could influence Japan in the following years. First of all, the United States must also ensure the credibility of deterrence, as well as security commitments made with its ally, with respect to the East China Sea and the Senkaku Islands. If not, if America will pressure Tokyo to compromise with China, fundamental damage will be done to the American-Japanese alliance and the result will be less US control over an escalating crisis in the East China Sea. Japanese economy is also an important variable. If "Abenomics" works and Japan were to succeed in doubling its gross national income in the next 30 to 40 years, the region may become more stable. But if Japan were to slide to "tier two" status, the world will become less stable. If we agree that the "normalization" of the Asia-Pacific and the peaceful integration under democratic norms require stability, then a strong Japan, linked to both maritime democracies and China's economy, is essential, because it might limit Beijing's expansion (Green, 2013).

All in all, Japan's National Security Strategy appears to be designed mainly to prevent threats from reaching the country, and, in order to do so, to strengthen its relations with the United States. The novelty consists in the possible military component declared in the objectives of the strategy and the attenuation of the country's non-engagement policy from the post-war decades. The purpose is not to revive Japanese militarism, but to ensure stability in the region by safeguarding the right of Japan to act in its own defense.

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THE TWO SUDANS:
OLD AND NEW FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

Ciprian SANDU

Abstract. *Both Sudans are very much open for business today, actively seeking foreign direct investment from West, East, and everywhere in between. During the half-century civil war between the north and the south, a lot of international actors were involved in one way or another. Some of them helped the rebels, some of them imposed sanctions, and others just wanted the oil. This article wants to present all the major actors who were involved mainly in the peace process in 2005, but, most importantly, an analysis of the present and future actions of these actors regarding both states.*

Keywords: *Sudan, South Sudan, Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, oil, China, Beijing, European Union, mediation, Dinka, Abyei, Merowe Dam, IGAD.*

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Historical ties of both countries are very different. The South had and still has strong ties with the West, but Juba has made it clear that if the Chinese are first to come and partner in developing the new nation, they will not hesitate to welcome them. Furthermore, China's "no strings attached" political approach and economic cooperation model is as attractive in Juba as it has proven elsewhere on the continent, not least in resource-rich states eager to develop fast. The North has strong ties with the Arab world, Russia and its Asian partners, China, India and Malaysia, with China looking to change sides due to the South oil fields. The involvement of the international community was very important in assisting the peacebuilding process in the area and now it seems that for the future it will play another important role – both Sudans

becoming day by day nothing else than donors in the „Cold War" between the East and the West, the main actors being USA and China. Unfortunately, both states failed to understand that in a region where the legal system is based mainly on colonial laws (written or un-written) , which are mostly individual-orientated, the time has come for both states to return to their traditional culture, and why not, to their traditional way of resolving conflicts, as already done in West Africa (Chereji&Wratto, 2013).

For over two decades, the United States has been an important player in efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Sudan and a major donor of humanitarian assistance to South Sudan. During the early years of the South Sudanese liberation struggle, the United States maintained good relations with the government of Sudan until the military coup in 1989 brought President Bashir to power. Relations between the SPLM and the United States began to expand in the early '90s, although access to senior officials did not take place until the late '90s. The Clinton Administration considered the Bashir regime a threat to secular regimes in Africa and the Middle East and a hub for international terrorism (Dagne, 2011). In May 1996, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and subsequently Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called Sudan "a viper's nest of terrorism." The United States closed its embassy in Khartoum in February 1996 and moved the remaining embassy personnel to Nairobi because of security concerns. The Clinton Administration also began to support allies in the region in an effort to isolate the Bashir regime and strengthen the SPLA. The United States provided an estimated $20 million in surplus U.S. military equipment to Uganda, Eritrea, and Ethiopia (Dagne, 2011). The U.S. support to these "frontline states" helped reverse military gains made by the Bashir government in the '90s. Some observers interpreted Washington's support to these countries as a measure to contain, punish, and facilitate the downfall of the Bashir government in Khartoum. The Clinton Administration also actively sought a peaceful resolution of the Sudanese conflict. President George W. Bush in large part followed the Clinton Administration's two-prong approach of engagement and containment. The Administration imposed additional sanctions on Sudan and remained actively engaged in mediation efforts. US sanctions prohibit US companies from doing any business in Sudan, except in the Southern part. As a result, the two countries have no economic relations, except for a few exceptions that are allowed by the US administration: import of Arabic gum for Coca-Cola, and a large plant in Khartoum that is owned by the same company. US law does not prohibit investing in foreign multinationals that operate in or sell to Sudan, but a nationwide Sudan Divestment campaign has managed to drive a lot of US money out of companies that are active in the country (Tarrosi, 2011).

In late October 2009, the Obama Administration announced a new policy towards Sudan. This policy focused on three priorities: an end to the conflict in Darfur; implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA); and ensuring Sudan does not become a safe haven for international terrorist groups (Dagne, 2011).

The United States will continue next year to work with international partners to implement the World Bank Multi-Donor Trust Fund South Strategy in a timely manner and to improve access to capital, particularly micro financing, for agricultural enterprises and local private sector ventures.

The United States will support efforts and initiatives that help increase trade between Sudan and its neighbors. Transparency in fiscal expenditures will be critical to attracting investment, and the United States will support World Bank anticorruption efforts in Southern Sudan.

South Sudan faces serious challenges in the coming years. There are a number of unresolved issues between the governments of Sudan and South Sudan, which could pose a serious threat to peace and stability in both countries. South Sudan lacks the capacity to deliver basic services to its people and demands are likely to increase in the coming years (Dagne, 2011). There are also a number of new rebellions, often backed by the government in Khartoum, against the Government of Southern Sudan.

South Sudan also lacks the infrastructure and institutions necessary for governance and delivery of basic services. Over the past six years, the GOSS has taken a number of steps to address these challenges. The 120 mile Juba-Nimulie road, funded by the United States, is the first major highway and is likely to boost trade between South Sudan and Uganda. In 2010, the United States provided $361.1 million in contribution for UNMIS operations, and an estimated $289.1 million in 2011. The request for 2012 was $298.6 million; the same figures were requested for 2013. On June 27, 2011, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1990, endorsing the deployment of Ethiopian peacekeeping forces to the Abyei region. U.S. assistance to South Sudan supports a wide range of programs. According to the FY2013 Congressional Budget Justification report, the United States "will support key stability and security issues through conflict mitigation, preventive diplomacy, and peace and reconciliation work". The United States will continue to provide assistance in security sector reform, says the budget, in an effort to transform the SPLA from a liberation movement to a professional armed force. The United States will also provide assistance in support of training of Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS), according to the budget (Dagne, 2011).

U.S. assistance is to focus also on the education and health care. Prof. Hassan Al-Saoury, chairman of the Sudanese Society for Political Sciences, told Xinhua that "the priority in South Sudan's external relations will be the United States, Uganda, and Kenya". South Sudan's relationship with the U.S. will not be a normal relationship because Americans played a great role in the negotiations between north and south Sudan, and almost all the agreements and protocols were written by American pens, he added.

The European Union was, is and will be an important player in the region. Formal cooperation with the European Union (EU) was suspended in March 1990, but substantial

humanitarian assistance continued, evenly divided over the North and the South. In 2001 the EU started a policy of "constructive engagement". This was inspired less by hopes that Sudan was about to become peaceful and democratic, and more by the opportunities that EU businesses saw emerging in a country with a nascent oil industry that was under full US boycott. Strong public feelings in parts of Europe, and Chinese and Malaysian ability to use the advantage of having been the first to get in, limited serious EU investments to a handful of companies, many of which French. In 2007, three large European multinationals – Siemens AG, ABB Ltd, and Rolls Royce PLC – announced their withdrawal from Sudan, after pressure from campaigners for divestment (Derks, Romer, 2008).

The EU has currently allocated €400 million through the European Development Fund (EDF) for the Sudan, used for food security and education. The European Union has been an important actor with political, relief and development aspects to its engagement. In terms of its political engagement, in recent years the EU's focus has been to support the CPA process with an emphasis on assisting governance reforms. In the longer term, the EU should continue to focus on encouraging good neighborly relations between the North and South, as well as considering carefully how best it can underpin stability and state-building processes in South Sudan (Attree, 2012). It has been argued that the EU sacrificed political leverage with GoS through its public support for the ICC arrest warrant for President Bashir, and has been considered important rather for its significant humanitarian and development assistance than for any role as a political mediator. The EU is a major relief and development actor. It delivered €650 million of development assistance from 2005until 2010, and €776 million in humanitarian aid for the same period.

The EU is currently reviewing its comprehensive strategy for Sudan and South Sudan. This is an important priority, since its last projects intended to cover the period 20052007. The latter strategy focuses EU development of assistance on the education and food security sectors, but areas in which the EU has provided assistance include rehabilitation and recovery of war-affected communities and infrastructure, support to CPA implementation, capacity development for non-state actors and public administrations, health, rule of law, media and human rights programs.

Canada was a real and pleasant surprise for me, being neutral and impartial, and its projects cover sensitive areas. According to the Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, in 2009, as part of Canada's new aid effectiveness agenda, Sudan was selected as a country of focus. After the referendum, Canada's engagement in Sudan and South Sudan continues to follow key foreign policy priorities of freedom, democracy, human rights, and rule of law. It also continues to respond to Canadian public and international interest in having the Canadian government play a diplomatic role, provide development assistance, and contribute to peace and stability in the two countries.

Canada's approach to Sudan is to coordinate its actions through a task force, of which Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development is a member, along with the Department of National Defense, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Together they are making a contribution toward helping the people of Sudan and South Sudan to address humanitarian challenges, reduce security threats and to support efforts for longer-term sustained economic growth. In terms of children and youth Canada focuses on increasing access to integrated basic services, such as education and health services, for at-risk older children and youth where needs are greatest, in a conflict-sensitive manner. Last year 66 health facilities were built or rehabilitated, as well as 47 buildings at the Juba Teaching Hospital in South Sudan, which receives 100,000 patients each year. A big step was made also by providing reintegration assistance to more than 900 children, of whom more than 500 were formerly associated with armed groups.

In the food security area, Canada provides vulnerable households with a way to generate income by providing employment skills that lead to improved food production and increased market access for agricultural products and livestock. Canada tried to improve livelihoods and provide better access to markets for more individuals and to improve agricultural production, including access to seeds and tools, for more households. Last year, Canada provided seeds and tools to 14,460 households to enable food production and formed 53 Farmer Field Schools, benefiting to over 1,000 farmers. Also very important, Canada supports efforts to help establish government institutions in South Sudan. This includes strengthening the core skills of public servants and improving public financial management; implementing the electronic payroll system for state level and Government of South Sudan ministries and commissions; and also developing training programs in order to strengthen core skills, including training in the English language and computer literacy, for public servants in ministries in states and in the Government of South Sudan.

Among other Western states, UK and Norway contributed a lot during the peace talks. The UK Government states that its objectives for Sudan and South Sudan for 2011-2015 are supporting the peaceful completion of the CPA, including the transition to two countries, working towards inclusive peace and justice in Darfur, supporting national and regional stability, promoting human rights, and encouraging the development of a democratic and accountable government (Attree, 2012).

The UK Department for International Development's bilateral aid review committed the UK to spend £140 million per year in Sudan and South Sudan from 2011 until 2015, to be focused on delivering health and education services, long-term development, reducing hunger and extreme poverty and responding to humanitarian crises. Over two-thirds of this amount has been allocated to South Sudan (Attree, 2012).

As well as continuing to be a major donor to Sudan and South Sudan, the UK is likely to maintain its active efforts to ensure a harmonized international approach both as part

of the troika of donors who supported the CPA negotiations and as an active proponent of multi-donor funding pools.

Norway was also an important factor in the peace process, building on its close relationship with the SPLM/A and its support to the role of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Sudan and South Sudan were allocated $124.1 million dollars of Norwegian development aid in 2010. These resources support recovery, education, health, food security, good governance, return and reintegration of refugees, and IDPs and institutional capacity building. Norway has also played a key role in ensuring inter-donor co-ordination, having hosted major international donor conferences on Sudan on more than one occasion.

At present, Western powers enjoy strong relations with the GoSS. Nevertheless, these strong relations could change, if, in order to encourage it to assume the responsibilities of full statehood and embrace democratic good governance, Western powers find themselves more routinely criticizing the GoSS, however constructively.

China is the most important Eastern actor in both Sudans. Historically, Sudan was the first country in Africa to receive large-scale Chinese oil investment when the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) invested in 1996, followed by the Malaysian owned Petronas and the Indian-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC), which financed the development of the current set of oil fields and built the network of pipelines, refineries and export terminals that enabled the sector to grow (Shankleman, 2011).

China is becoming increasingly dependent on oil import and has, unlike Western countries, not been constrained by public concerns regarding human rights issue in the oil fields in Sudan. China has, together with Russia and countries like Poland and Belarus, sold military equipment to the GoS and will continue to do so to gain the government favor in the oil business (Shankleman, 2011). An important action taken by China in order to help Sudan was connected to financial debts and loans. In 2001, it was reported that China cancelled 63 percent of Sudan's $67.3 million debt. China cancelled a further $70 million of Sudanese debt in 2007 and provided $13 million interest-free loans for Sudan to construct a new presidential palace. Another Chinese action aimed at lessening Khartoum's economic isolation was the agreement in 2008, as an element of broader economic co-operation, to open branches of Chinese banks in Sudan (Attree, 2012).

A number of headline infrastructure development projects have been backed by China and built by Chinese firms in the North. Among the most well-known is the Merowe Dam on the Nile. The lead financier of this $1.5 billion project was China's Export Import Bank (Exim Bank). It was built by Chinese, French and German companies.

In 2010 Chinese consortia or corporations reportedly won contracts of $838 million, $711 million and $705 million to build the Upper Atbara, Shereik and Kajbar Dams

respectively (Attree, 2012). In February 2011, a subsidiary of the state-owned China Communications Construction Company also won a contract worth $1.2 billion for its role in the construction of Khartoum's new international airport, which is co- financed by the Exim Bank alongside banks from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey. Other major Chinese projects involve power, water and transport infrastructure. In March 2010, Exim Bank agreed on a loan of $274 million to fund the construction of a 630 km network to supply electricity from the new Al Fula power plant (Attree, 2012). The latest news about China's aid came from the Sudanese Finance and National Economy minister, Ali Mahmood Abdel-Rasool, who told the national assembly less than a month ago that his government is in talks with China to obtain a $500 million loan to construct the Merowe dam canal (AllAfrica, 2013).

Abdel-Rasool, who was testifying on a proposed law for additional FY (Financial Year) 2013 appropriations, noted that Beijing suspended credit to Khartoum following the secession of South Sudan and the loss of oil reserves that existed when the country was united. Sudanese officials said that oil was used in the past as collateral for Chinese loans and following the country's partition there were reports that Khartoum offered gold mine concessions instead to maintain the low of loans, mainly because the US sanctions and accumulation of debt arrears prevents Sudan from obtaining other loans through international financial institutions.

In the wake of Sudan's partition, Beijing accelerated a re-orientation of its engagement in the resulting two states, most significantly through a new courtship in Juba (African Studies Centre, 2013). China's historical support for Khartoum left a sour legacy in the South, but the potential for mutual economic bene it means that a new chapter in bilateral relations is now being written. Balancing new friends in Juba with old friends in Khartoum, however, has proven a delicate dance. China has been drawn into a high-stakes oil crisis between the two, the consequences of which may temper an otherwise rapidly expanding relationship with Juba. As South Sudan prepared for its 2011 self-determination referendum, China recognized the increasing inevitability of independence (African Studies Centre, 2013). Eager to maintain stable relationships and the continuity of its oil investments, now situated primarily in the South, its stance evolved to reflect changing political realities. Beijing is keen to preserve and expand its projects in South Sudan's oil sector, but Chinese companies are also locking to other sectors, above all to build infrastructure in a country that has almost none. The number of Chinese nationals and commercial actors in Juba has spiked dramatically in the last two and a half years since independence. Besides oil, Chinese companies are most interested in infrastructure, and South Sudan needs everything: roads, bridges, telecommunications, hospitals, power plants, schools, dams and irrigation systems, and new oil infrastructures.

As negotiations toward a North-South oil deal foundered dangerously in late 2011, the role of China gained center stage, and many in the international community (and in the

two Sudans) thought Beijing would be forced to intervene (International Crisis Group, 2012). Juba wanted help in pressuring Khartoum to cut a reasonable deal, and when the North began to confiscate Southern oil instead, it interpreted China's inaction as passive complicity and moved to leverage its increasingly uncomfortable position. Both sides, as well as many international actors, assumed China would weigh in more assertively, though perceptions of Beijing's influence and readiness to employ it were unrealistic. The shutdown of the oil fields, abduction of Chinese construction workers in Southern Kordofan and expulsion of the head of a Chinese-led oil consortium added to Beijing's vexing political problem and generated anxiety among Chinese nationals in North and South. Both Sudans continue to try to pull China into their respective corners, but Beijing has resisted taking sides, as its principal objective remains balanced relations with North and South (International Crisis Group, 2012). Also, given the considerable investment in developing and operating the oil sector, the Sudans remain important for China National Petroleum Company the state-owned oil giant, and thus a focus for the government.

A further area of investment that appears to lie at the crossroads between economic investment and human development is China's growing interest in supporting the development of agriculture in Sudan and South Sudan (Attree, 2012). Co-operation in this area could be crucial to the challenging task of diversifying the two countries' economies in time to stave off declining oil revenues – and could make an important contribution to the food security of the wider region and other external trading partners. However, although Chinese actors have made some positive contributions through such projects, there have also been criticisms of the approaches taken and the impacts on peace and conflict dynamics of some Chinese projects. For example, while the Merowe Dam bene its Sudan by providing irrigation water and doubling the supply of electricity, it has also been criticized for displacing 50, 000 people from the Nile valley, amid violently suppressed protests.

A further contentious issue is that despite significant Chinese-backed development projects in Sudan, in South Sudan such projects are not yet comparable in scale. The perception that this is the case is widely shared among South Sudan's people and officials.

South Sudan continues to face profound security challenges both within its borders and along the new and restive international boundary with Sudan, as events over 2013 have made clear. Chinese commercial operations in South Sudan have increased sharply since 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement brought Sudan's long-running civil war to an end. According to statistics from the Chinese Embassy in South Sudan, by January 2013 about 100 Chinese companies had registered in the country, mainly working in oil production and infrastructure construction. By April 2013, Chinese companies had signed Memoranda of Understanding for more than 60 projects in a range of sectors including roads, schools, telecoms, energy, and bridges. The demand for this

kind of infrastructural development in South Sudan is massive, with the World Bank estimating the annual infrastructure funding gap at 879 million dollars a year. It is undeniable that economic cooperation and infrastructure investments have had positive impacts in South Sudan, fast-tracking the construction of roads across vast and remote locations and stimulating local economies. However, when local communities are not adequately consulted and their security concerns not satisfactorily recognized, new economic developments also risk making insecurity worse, as is the case of the Merowe Dam.

The perception that Chinese actors have not sufficiently helped communities could, unfortunately, in lame local grievances and fuel wider patterns of insecurity. But community engagement failures also carry significant risks for China, potentially putting company operations in jeopardy, citizens at risk, and damaging China's reputation both at a local level and internationally. Moreover, the oil impasse may temper the pace of Chinese engagement in the South but is unlikely to stall it. Angered by the sense that China still treats South Sudan as a province rather than an independent state, Juba will continue to make demands, particularly with regard to management of its oil sector (International Crisis Group, 2012), but if managed pragmatically, the opportunities for mutual economic bene it should surpass episodic tensions. Sudan is Africa's fifth country when it comes to foreign direct investments by Asian countries. Sudan's three biggest investors are China, Malaysia and India. Japan is the country's major Asian donor (Derks, Romer, 2008). China and Malaysia have shown to play a rather different role than Western nations, as they do not seem to question Sudan's internal policies. Malaysia is Sudan's second largest investor, with Malaysia's state oil firm Petronas alone having investments worth 1.45 billion dollars. With major shares in all blocks currently under development, Petronas may soon take over from CNPC as Sudan's leading oil company. The company is assessing engineering bids with Sudan's Ministry of Energy and Mining to build a-100,000-barrels-per-day refinery in Port Sudan but plans have been frequently postponed and no progress has been reported. Like China, Malaysia is urging western nations not to impose sanctions on Sudan over its failure to resolve the conflict in Darfur.

In January 2006, India signed an agreement with Sudan for a 350 million dollar loan for setting up a 500 MW power project by state-run Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. The total project costs of about 500 million dollar shared by the two countries. In addition, Sudan and India signed a loan agreement of 41.9 million dollars for the Singa-Gedarif transmission line and sub-station. Sudan had and still has strong relations also with the oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf, in particular Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. During the serious economic crisis in the 80s, Saudi Arabia provided Sudan with military aid, concessionary loans, outright financial grants, and oil at prices well below the international level. Relations however have not always been smooth. In 1991 some 200, 000 Sudanese migrants were expelled from Persian

Gulf countries because of Sudan's support for Iraq in the Gulf war, while Saudi Arabia suspended grants, project loans, and concessionary oil sales. Arab investments surged between 2001 and 2005 15 times to 2.3 billion dollars. The jump after the signing of the CPA in 2005 is most remarkable. Contrary to the Asian investments, they cover the full specter of Sudan's economy, oil of course, but also telecommunication, agriculture, industry, construction, and transportation. Investors from the Gulf States have very high interests in Sudan's banking sector.

In my analysis I reserved a special place for the African actors involved in the war and peace talks between the two Sudans, mainly their neighbors. During the war, the SPLM maintained strong ties with many African countries and received political, financial, and military assistance from some governments. In East Africa, the SPLM enjoys strong ties with the governments of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Speaking about these friendly states, Al-Saoury described the future relationship between South Sudan and Uganda as "strategic", as most of the major commodities and labor force come to South Sudan from Uganda. He also added that because of the rebellion in the north of Uganda on the border with South Sudan, the two countries needed to establish a strategic relationship to end the existence of the Lord Resistance Army militias which threatened the stability of the region. Regarding South Sudan's relationship with Kenya, the same Al-Saoury said that Kenya was a neighbor country of South Sudan and it was the patron of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), so it had a specialty in the relations with the new-born state. Kenya will develop more projects in the future, the most important ones being in infrastructure and mass-media. Kenya has launched construction of a 5.2 billion dollar railway line which when completed will link Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. The 1,250-kilometerlong railway will be constructed with funding from China and will initially cover the Mombasa – Nairobi route. The initial line is expected to be completed by 2017, with further extensions to Uganda, eastern DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan to follow. The railway line is expected to boost Kenya's status as a regional economic hub and also promote economic integration of the East African Community through the sharing of infrastructure facilities among member states (AllAfrica, 2013). At the same time, journalist unions in Uganda and Kenya are to conduct joint programs with their colleagues in South Sudan in order to strengthen the capacity of journalists in the two-year-old nation to defend press freedom, organize their union and conduct advocacy campaigns. Their main goal is to help South Sudan to develop the capacity to handle press freedom advocacy campaigns and have a strong union of journalists according to UJU secretary-general Stephen Ouma.

In addition, South Sudan is seeing expanded trade and business activities locally and with the neighboring Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo due to the new 167 mile road in Western Equatoria. A number of towns now have electricity, thereby increasing their business activities. The GOSS has also taken steps to expand primary school enrollment, especially for girls, over the past several years.

Under successive governments, other countries like Ethiopia provided significant political and military support to the SPLM/A (Dagne, 2011). Eritrea provided major military assistance in the '90s, especially to SPLM/A and its allies in eastern Sudan. The SPLM leadership has maintained ties with Egypt over the past two decades, although the government of Egypt under Hosni Mubarak was not supportive of the South's right to self-determination. The involvement of the international community is an important factor in assisting the peacebuilding process in the country. International actors such as the USA had applied significant pressure on both the GoS and the SPLM/A to reach a conflict settlement in January 2005. Moreover, the peace agreement would probably not have been signed without the concerted efforts of the IGAD and the international community led by the Friends/Partners of IGAD, given that the two negotiating parties lacked confidence in each other (Dagne, 2011). IGAD is now playing a supervisory role through the evaluation commission which recently was established by the Presidency, while the mandate to monitor the implementation of the peace process lies with UNMIS (United Nations Mission in Sudan).

Over the past ifteen years, two trends are worth stressing related to the position of Sudan within the region and the role of regional actors in the Sudan's conflicts. First, the GoS has managed to move away from almost complete isolation to substantial regional support, though relations with Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda remained tense; second, the conflict in the South has been mainly mediated by Sudan's Southern neighbors. By contrast, the Darfur conflict enabled Sudan's Northern neighbors and other „marginalized mediators" like Nigeria to accomplish a diplomatic comeback under the auspices of the African Union (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006). Most recently, the Egyptian government seized the chance to offer its services by hosting talks in Cairo with the Northern opposition. The distribution of roles therefore reflects geopolitical realities around Sudan's conflicts and the strategic interests of the 'mediating' governments and security interests, not humanitarian concerns, usually drive the regional actors' involvement in peacemaking activities (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

Only two countries played a genuine peacemaking role, in the sense that they have never been party to the conflict they proposed to mediate. Kenya's support for the SPLM/A has never been of a military kind and the Kenyan authorities have always managed to keep cordial relations with Sudan. This may explain why Kenya has been at the forefront of peace diplomacy. The other one, Nigeria, has long-standing political and cultural ties with Sudan. The countries share no border but are similarly divided along North-South and Muslim-non Muslim fault lines. The Nigerian authorities mediated, unsuccessfully, the Southern conflict in the early 1990s and tried again a decade later with respect to the Darfur crisis (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

The involvement of Arab leaders and the Arab League inevitably impacted the conduct and contents of the negotiations in a way that the GoS did not object to. Hence,

Nigeria's position on Darfur has seemed to come increasingly closer to the first group of this typology. Nevertheless, as it provides troops to the AU mission in Darfur and may contribute to the UN mission in the South, Nigeria's role in peace implementation may remain critical for the years to come.

Arab countries and organizations have never shown great sympathy for the Southern Sudanese cause and the prospect of an independent South. Egypt's concern with NIF fundamentalism in the 90s was counter-balanced by its fear of seeing the SPLM/A getting control over the Nile headwaters. For its part, Libya supported the SPLM/A until the fall of Nimeiri, but then realigned its policy and worked to improve both relations with the NCP and its image as regional peacemaker (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

In the Darfur conflict, Arab countries tend to support, partly for domestic reasons, the GoS on behalf of Arab solidarity. This group also includes Ethiopia, which shifted sides following the outbreak of hostilities with Eritrea in 1998 and has since built a mutually benefiting alliance with Khartoum.

Sudan's neighbors have played a significant role in Sudan's civil wars. The relationships between the governments in the region have been riddled with distrust and tensions caused by disputes over resources and issues of culture and religion. Several of Sudan's neighbors (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and in the past Libya) support or have supported the SPLM/A and the NDA in Sudan, while the GoS has supported insurgent movements in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Chad, this tendency does not bene it any of the states but, rather like other vicious spirals of conflict, it has been self-sustaining.

Egypt is a very important regional actor and its position regarding the North-South conflict is crucial for any peace settlement to be sustainable. Egypt would like to see a moderate cooperative and united Sudan and is opposed to the radical Islamist line of the NIF government, which has close affiliations to fundamentalist Egyptian groups. However, the main issue determining the relationship between Egypt and Sudan is that of war given Egypt's interest in and dependence on securing or ensuring access to as much of the Nile water as possible. The birth of a new country would make it necessary to renegotiate the Nile Waters Agreement from 1959, which as it stands is in Egypt's favor, and therefore Egypt will be very much against new negotiations (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

Uganda has been the SPLM/A's most important foreign supporter since Mengistu's downfall in 1991. It has provided a haven and military support for the movement and Ugandan troops have even participated actively in SPLM/A offensive. The GoS has supported the Ugandan rebel movement, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Allied Democratic Forces. While Bashir claimed in 2001 that it had stopped all support for the LRA, we may argue that this is not true and that the GoS now provides its support through different channels.

Eritrea also has a highly tense relationship with the GoS. It harbors the NDA headquarters and the GoS have supported the Muslim insurgent movement Eritrean Islamic Jihad. The border with Eritrea has been seen as a potential new frontline, which would place the GoS under further pressure. However there are indications that both countries are trying to review their relationships so that they could return to normality for the bene it of both countries.

The last two actors presented in this area will be the African Union and UN because they behave like true mediators, being impartial and neutral in the conflict and most importantly because they are not actors in the Cold War of Eastern and Western donors.

On October 27, 2013, the Ngok Dinka community in the disputed Abyei region of Sudan held a unilateral vote to determine whether Abyei would remain part of Sudan or join South Sudan. The African Union (AU) strongly condemned the referendum as unacceptable and irresponsible. The AU maintained that the referendum violated AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) decisions and could further complicate the search for a common solution based on the framework of existing commitments, given that the issue of voter eligibility had not yet been resolved. Just before the vote, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) members had expressed grave concerns about the extremely unstable situation in Abyei, saying the referendum could fuel tensions between Sudan and South Sudan and hamper a solution to the border disputes in the area. The Misseriya, a largely nomadic tribe in western Sudan who use Abyei seasonally for grazing, have in turn threatened to hold their own referendum. In April 2012, the PSC adopted a road map aimed at resolving differences between Sudan and South Sudan, including the final status of Abyei. According to the road map, if the negotiating actors still failed to reach consensus, the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) would formulate a proposal that would then be authorized by the PSC as an ultimate and compulsory resolution. The AUHIP proposal on the Final Status of the Abyei Area (published on September 21, 2012) made provisions for a referendum in October 2013, but once again it proved impossible to get the buy-in of both governments. The AU has not yet picked a new date for the Abyei referendum. The two documents exclude the Misseriya from voting due to their largely nomadic and seasonal use of the Abyei region, although the AUHIP proposal allows them continued use of the area for cattle grazing. Some claim that including the Misseriya will unfairly bias the vote towards unity, in favor of the more developed Sudan. By not waiting for the conclusion of the ongoing AUHIP process, holding a referendum suggests a sense of despair among the Dinka that the two Sudans will ever reach an agreement.

On the one hand, despite challenges on the ground, the AU – as one of the leading actors seeking to explore solutions to the challenges in the area – has been criticized for lack of action.

Moreover, the delays in Abyei are a result of Khartoum and Juba's failure to come to an agreement, and neither the PSC nor AUHIP have adequate leverage, or so-called ‚car-

rots and sticks', over the real actors behind the Abyei standoff. What does this mean for the AU's ability to mediate in the region? A referendum in Abyei is possible, but Sudan and South Sudan need to negotiate in good faith, particularly with the view to settle existing border issues, making use of the AU and other actors such as the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). For its part, the AU should continue to uphold its commitments through assertive leadership and not be seen to be neglecting the issue of Abyei at the PSC level. The AU should push for inclusive grassroots level dialogues that adequately represent all communities involved, and agreements and recommendations should be integrated into high-level approaches. The AU also needs to identify points of leverage and stress mutually beneficial outcomes to enhance its mediation efforts. This should increase the chances that agreements be finalized and respected, and empha-size the importance of a mutually beneficial outcome for Sudan and South Sudan. It is only through strong commitment to the process, inclusive dialogue and an innovative use of incentives on the part of the two governments that agreement can be reached.

On June 27, 2011, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1990, endors-ing the deployment of Ethiopian peacekeeping forces to the Abyei region. Its mandate comprises also human rights- and democracy monitoring. UNMIS is active in all parts of the country. Besides monitoring activities at different levels and tracks, UNMIS is also involved in awareness raising and education activities with MPs, politicians and activ-ists through e.g. workshops and seminars on democracy and human rights. Operating within the overall UN goal of achieving peace, development and human rights for all, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) is the latest element in the UN system in Sudan. UNMIS was established by Security Council Resolution 1590 of March 24, 2005, under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, as a peacekeeping mission and lead agency for all UN agencies in Sudan. On November 25, 2013, The Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations peacekeeping force for Abyei which is tasked with overseeing the demilitarization of an area that is contested by Sudan and South Sudan. In a unanimous vote, the 15-member Council extended the UN Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA) until the end of the following May. The mission was set up by the Council in June 2011 following an outbreak of violence after Sudanese troops took control of the area, displacing tens of thousands of people in the weeks before South Sudan became an independent State after seceding from Sudan.

The United Nations has provided human rights training to the commissioners and heads of police in Unity State's seven counties in an effort to protect citizens from human rights abuses. During the training, the human rights section of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in collaboration with the government's Human Rights Commission emphasized the importance of observing human rights laws. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan, through it disarmament, demobilization and reintegration work is providing intensive training to the South Sudan security services in order to create a national Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control. A composite group

from South Sudan's army (SPLA), the South Sudanese Police Service, National Security, Wildlife and Prison Services participated in an intensive 12-day training funded by the UNMISS under the guidance of experts from international companies who specialize in marking and tracking the low of weapons. The training also thought the students the legal background to small arms control, weapons identification, and safe weapons handling procedures.

In 2014 the government, with the support of UNMISS, will work to implement a national weapons marking campaign of all government held small arms. Although UNMIS has no direct responsibility for sustainable development, its activities would complement ongoing work in this area, including the Millennium Development Goals. The work of the UN and the African Union in Sudan is complementary; they maintain strong relations at operational and strategic levels. Assistance to the AU is part of the Mission's responsibility. The mandate of the peace support operation could take approximately seven years including the pre-interim and interim periods (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

As Juba opens up to new investments, it should take two critical factors into consideration. First – the potential correlations between the economic partnerships it forges, the character of the state that emerges and its foreign policy. While it hopes to remain politically aligned with the West, time will tell whether expanding economic partnerships with China or others will have a gravitational effect. For now, it wants to welcome, and leverage, the interest of all actors. Secondly, in the midst of a mounting budget crisis, Juba must consider how to secure and direct investment so as to best serve its development agenda, calm its own domestic insecurity and prevent even greater state fragility. It must actively shape new economic relationships rather than become a passive recipient of foreign-authored investment. Given limited government capacity and an untested legislative framework, its economic planners must take care to harness such an investment for its own bene it, lest Africa's newest state be overrun in a resource scramble.

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