

Les risques et menaces liés à une perte d'influence qui s'accélérait

The Risks and Threats related to an Accelerating Loss of Influence by the EU

Il s'agira principalement de mettre en perspective ce que signifierait pour l'UE, son activité économique et sa sécurité, mais aussi sa cohésion interne, un rétrécissement de son périmètre d'influence ainsi qu'une perte de crédibilité de sa politique d'élargissement.

This is in principle aimed at exploring what would mean for the EU economy and security, but also for its internal cohesion, a narrowing of its area of influence, as well as a loss of credibility of its enlargement policy.

- Former Belgian Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens once described Europe as “an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm.” At that time (end of the Cold War) that description of the status of the power and influence of Europe mattered much less than today, in spite of modest progress achieved over the last 30 years in terms of developing EU's Foreign and Security Policy, as well as most recent steps in developing EU defence capabilities. Then (early 1990's):
 - ✓ the Soviet Union was dying, while opening up a huge Central and East European geopolitical space for subsequent NATO and EU enlargements;
 - ✓ the Trans-Atlantic relations were solid-rock, and the US was the uncontested leader of the Western post-Cold War global hegemony, while Washington shared its political influence and military might with its European allies;
 - ✓ the European economic integration was gaining momentum towards growing European political integration (creation of the European Union, the EURO zone, Schengen area);
 - ✓ The Eastern Neighbourhood was mostly ravaged by several local ethnic conflicts stemming from the dismantlement of the former Soviet Union and the creation of a plethora of new independent post-Soviet states.
 - ✓ stability in the Southern Neighbourhood was mostly hampered by the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the irresponsible geopolitical adventures attempted by local dictators, such as Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Muhamad Gaddafi.
- However, the regional context within and around the EU, as well as at the global distribution of power have changed beyond recognition over the past years:
 - ✓ The return to Great Powers' competition has increasingly placed the US and Europe on opposite positions. On the one hand, Washington is seeing revisionist China and Russia as the most important challengers of US power and influence in the world. On the other hand, some Western Europeans are seeing room for a Bismarck-inspired strategy for the EU as the Great Power that maintains good relations with all the other Great Powers.
 - ✓ US president Donald Trump's international practice has apparently been built upon the following tenets with a direct disruptive impact on European power and influence at the global and regional (Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods) levels:

- the US global leadership promoted by his predecessors was not cost-effective for America;
 - the system of alliances and partnerships just burdened the American budget and failed to provide the same strategic, economic, and geopolitical output they used to throughout the second half of the 20th century;
 - multilateralism and international organizations and agreements uselessly constrained American power, and implicitly its freedom to exert it at the global and regional levels;
 - issue-oriented ad-hoc, temporary arrangements were more profitable in meeting US national interests;
 - there were a number of states, including allies and partners, such as Germany, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Australia, but also adversaries, like China and Russia, who took unfair advantage of American benign hegemony in the post-Cold War era, and they should be powerfully pushed back.
- ✓ BREXIT, Russia's and Turkey's return to regional power status have seriously questioned the viability of the EU integration project both internally and EU's role-model in spreading democracy, stability and prosperity to the European neighbourhoods; in an EGF study of April 2013, authors have noted the rise of "old powers", Russia and Turkey, in the Wider Black Sea, while arguing that prominent "external actors", such as the EU, were seeing their roles increasingly reduced to mere monitors of the situation.
 - ✓ Since then, Russia and Turkey have expanded their regional reach from the Wider Black Sea towards the Middle East and Northern Africa having set military strongholds in Syria, and more recently growing their political and military involvement in Libya. They have done so at the expense of the EU and the European states who had just been helplessly watching president Trump's bilateral deals with presidents Erdogan and Putin in Syria.
 - ✓ President Trump's destructive approach to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) aimed to control the ability to use nuclear power by Iran, the most brilliant achievement of EU diplomacy over the last decade, has been another blow to EU's political influence.
 - ✓ And we could go on and on with listing the setbacks against EU's power and influence in the contemporary world.
- These numerous setbacks have highlighted and reinforced the political and military weaknesses of the EU leading into an obvious narrowing of its post-Cold War area of influence from Central Asia to Eastern Europe, and from the Middle East to Northern Africa. They have left the EU struggling with the following risks and threats:
 - ✓ growing irrelevance in conflict management and resolution in places like Ukraine/Crimea, South Caucasus, Syria, Libya, Iran, Palestine,
 - ✓ decreasing power and influence to spread and protect the European values and interests, in spite of spending lots of money in support of the

implementation of the Eastern Partnership, the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the Stabilization and Association Process in the Western Balkans;

- ✓ while being targeted by huge waves of Asian and African immigrants,
 - ✓ and being widely exposed to terrorist, cyber, and hybrid threats.
 - ✓ European energy security has also been exposed to serious risks due to great powers' (US, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey) rivalries and geopolitical games and the fragility of governance and of statehood in some energy source and transit countries.
- To illustrate more concretely this broad range of risks and threats stemming from EU's decreasing regional influence in its Neighbourhoods, we may consider the examples of Turkey and Libya, and the risks and threats created by EU's decreasing influence in those countries.

Example 1: Turkey

- Turkey's relations with the West have been marred by significant tensions since 2003 when the Turkish Parliament rejected the access to Turkish territory of the US troops during the Iraq war, and were further poisoned in 2004 by the accession of Cyprus to the EU. Moreover, in the aftermath of Romanian and Bulgarian accession to NATO (both of them Black Sea Littoral states), the access of allied naval forces to the Black Sea and the role of non-Littoral states in regional cooperation have been subjects of contention between the US and Turkey.
- However, while the West could not prevent Turkey from playing a more prominent *tous azimuts* regional role, Ankara's allegiance to NATO membership and genuine interest for EU membership have continuously diminished, in particular in the aftermath of the June 2016 attempted *coup d'état* against President Erdogan.
- Russia has realized that Turkey aims to be a regional player and that, in the long run, Ankara will not accept anything less than an equal regional partnership with Moscow in geopolitical areas of mutual interest. Therefore, diplomatic overtures between Ankara and Moscow have become notorious. Ultimately, the current Moscow-Ankara relationship is one of convenience: the two nations must cooperate due to each other's vested interests in the entire Wider Black Sea region, which predominantly encompass the Caspian and Eurasian energy supplies, and their transportation to European markets.
- Turkey today has become more nationalist and inclined to assert its political and military power than in recent years. This is in part due to the political ambitions and the personality of President Erdogan, but it might have also resulted from some other factors such as past economic growth and historical heritage. More concretely, EU leaders must deal with ongoing risks and threats stemming from relations with Turkey, such as:

- ✓ Syrian refugees in Turkey illegally crossing into Europe through Greece and the Western Balkans,
- ✓ the expulsion of jihadists of EU origin from Turkey, and their possible involvement in future terrorist attacks in Europe;
- ✓ drilling operations around Cyprus coupled with open threats to use naval force against European drillings and energy infrastructure in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- ✓ the agreement with Libya on maritime boundaries, which conflicts with Cyprus and Greece's rights for maintaining and exploiting their own Exclusive Economic Zones,
- ✓ the implications for EU businesses resulting from eventual U.S. sanctions against Turkey,
- ✓ consequences of Brexit for Turkey's relations with the UK and the EU.

According to Marc Pierini "In the final analysis, from an EU standpoint, Turkey today has a triple identity: a strategic partner for Europe, especially in the economic and trade fields; Europe's adversarial interlocutor in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East; and a negative player within NATO."

Example 2: Libya

- The Libyan conflict began with the 2011 overthrow of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi after the intervention by European forces, with American help.
- For more than nine years, the Libyan conflict has been simmering and the European Union has mostly ignored it. Libya mattered as a playground for terrorism and a source of immigrants which may potentially disrupt European politics. Many weapons of the old regime spread all over the sub-Saharan region, feeding other militants and terrorist groups, and producing thousands of refugees and migrants seeking safety in Europe. Libya remained a major transit and jumping-off point for sub-Saharan African emigrants crossing to Europe.
- The recent involvement of Russia and Turkey on opposite sides in the Libyan civil war has awakened European fears of a new Great Powers' game in Northern Africa, right at the centre of the Southern neighbourhood.
- Consequently, European countries recently became much more engaged in the Libyan conflict. The recent Berlin conference on Libya confirmed that European countries do not call the shots in that country. This could be a preview of the Mediterranean of tomorrow, one in which old powers (Russia and Turkey) are returning, and new actors (China and Arab states) are emerging, all of these becoming increasingly relevant in shaping the dynamics of the Mediterranean Sea.
- The Berlin conference did put European countries back in the game, and their diplomatic activity that preceded it was a positive step. Yet, their influence on Libyan actors has declined sharply for several reasons:
 - ✓ European divisions, above all between France and Italy;
 - ✓ the neglect of key regional actors, with Morocco, Qatar, Tunisia, and the Arab Maghreb Union excluded from the conference;
 - ✓ the lack of a genuinely proactive approach.

- By contrast, most recent developments clearly showed that Turkey, Russia, and others are wielding more influence on Libyan actors than the European countries.
- Mr. Josep Borrell, the new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has repeatedly emphasized the dangers of Turkish military involvement in Libya and has criticized Europe's preference for citing international law as a response to every conflict: "We Europeans, since we don't want to participate in a military solution, we barricade ourselves in the belief there is no military solution. [...] Nobody will be very happy if, on the Libyan coast, there is a ring of military bases from the Russian and Turkish navies in front of the Italian coast." he told the European Parliament. He added in a Twitter message: "But this is something that could very much happen. We need to engage strongly, keep Libya united and find a peaceful solution to this conflict."

Possible solutions aimed at countering the current decrease of political and military power and influence of the EU in its neighbourhoods:

- European reactions to the Trumpian US foreign and security policy have emerged. For example, German, British, and French high level officials jumped to the rescue of the **values-based multilateralism** and **the rules-based international order**.
- Given the ill-preparedness of the EU to militarily cope with an era of Great Powers' competition and faced with an increasing uncertainty regarding US president's commitment to NATO, many European politicians, including French president Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, have argued in favour of "**European strategic autonomy**".