



Weekly Analysis: 16/2007

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The 'Weekly Analysis' (available in the 'Weekly' section of the Equilibri.net home page, or in the pop-up menu) is published every Monday and contains information from each geographical region. The analysis of the principal and most significant events supply a clear and precise view of international relations through examining both actual and future scenarios.

[Iraq: tensions between Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan could result in a military attack](#)

Last week witnessed a significant increase in tensions between Ankara and the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan. According to Turkey the border area with northern Iraq hosts five training camps containing up to 4.500 Kurdish guerrillas; on the basis of this information the National Security Council (MGK), the leading national security organisation, discussed the measures necessary to stop the infiltrations of terrorists. Ankara has also expressed itself as being strongly opposed to the referendum, scheduled to be held within 2007, regarding the future status of Kirkuk: Turkey has taken a stance in defence of the Turkoman minority which live in the city, however, what really concerns Erdogan's Government is the possible strengthening of Kurdistan through greater autonomy. In particular Ankara is worried about economic autonomy and any ulterior encouragement of the Kurdish independence groups which operate inside Turkey.

The choice of position has angered the Kurdish leader Barzani who has denounced Turkey's interference in the internal affairs of Kurdistan. Barzani has stated that if Turkey interferes in the Kirkuk issue then Kurdistan will do the same in Diyarbakir (the centre of Kurdish national sentiment in Turkey). The height of tensions came when the head of Turkey's armed forces, General Yasar Buyukanit, stated the necessity for trans-border military operations against the Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq. Both the European Union and the United States have invited Ankara to prudence, any military action in Kurdistan would further destabilise Iraq and the entire region. In any case the task of stabilising the border area will be the responsibility of the Iraqi Government; unless Ankara attacks Kurdistan, an action that would in all probability be supported by Damascus and Tehran both of whom are concerned of possible actions by the Kurdish minorities in the region.

Donatella Scatamacchia

[Georgia: Abkhazia provokes tensions between Washington and Moscow once again](#)

The Russian ambassador to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, has strongly criticised the United States for not having conceded an entry visa to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia (the Georgian republic that has declared itself - although as yet unrecognised - independent). By doing so the United States have denied the Minister the opportunity to address the UN Security Council in a session intended to decide upon the prolonging of the UN observers mission to Georgia. According to Churkin, the decision greatly damaged the independence cause in the region. Authorities in Washington have stated that it was the politician who withdrew his visa request.

The principal accusations made by Moscow against Washington regard the introduction of double standards in the approach to diverse conflict situations. This is not a new issue to Russian-American relations; in February Putin supported the necessity to adopt universal principals in dealing with the 'frozen conflicts' in the Caucus region and in Kosovo. If on the one hand the independence of Abkhazia and Southern Ossezia from Georgia is opposed by the United States the same does not hold true for Kosovo's independence from Serbia. The Kremlin traditionally supports the Serbian position.

In America's geo-strategic vision of the vast area which spreads from the Adriatic Sea to the Caspian Sea across the Black Sea regions and the southern Caucus it is obvious that national questions have diverse geopolitical significances according to their context. Over the last decade the question of Kosovo has weakened Belgrade and strengthened the advance of the Euro-Atlantic influence in south-eastern Europe. The issue of Abkhazia on the other hand puts Georgia's integrity at risk (the country is strategic from an energy and military-political point of view) in a moment in which Tbilisi is governed by a pro-American administration which nurtures the ambition to join NATO.

For the United States any attempt, on the part of Russia, to create analogies between the two questions is aimed at complicating discussions inside the Security Council. The Ahtisaari plan for the independence of Kosovo is based on conditions that cannot be repeated in the Georgian regions that aspire to independence. The issue is further complicated by the Georgian Government's attempts to gain the support of the European Union.

This latest dispute between Moscow and Washington comes in a moment in which relations between the two countries are already tense. The clash over the installation of the American anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic is still raging and the Abkhazia question risks further blocking the Security Council given Russia's veto powers. Any further degeneration in the American-Russian crisis could have an influence on other issues currently being discussed by the Security Council; the Iranian nuclear question for example.

Felice Di Leo

[Indonesia: the first results of the agreement with Australia](#)

The security and cooperation agreement, signed a few months ago by the Indonesian President Yudhoyono and the Australian Prime Minister Howard, has produced its first results. During the first half of April the collaboration agreements between two country's

security forces were implemented; one of the principal objectives of the agreements is preventing the formation and diffusion of armed groups aligned to trans-national Islamic terrorism. On 3 April the Australian Federal Police (AFP), in collaboration with the Indonesian Police, made eight arrests. According to Canberra all were part of the Islamic organisation Jemaah Islamiah (JI). The operation took place on the Indonesian island of Java in accordance to the agreement: terrorism in south-east Asia can be fought through joint operations and the exchange of classified information and intelligence. Both countries emphasised that the arrests were seriously damaging to the JI and stated that the results were a positive example of bilateral regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

Canberra particularly emphasised the need to contrast the diversified terrorist networks in Asia stating that the organisations were able to cross borders and included, in addition to the JI, also Abu Sayaff (primarily active in the southern Philippines) and a series of smaller groups. The attacks in Bali in 2002 and Jakarta in 2003 and 2004 are examples of how Australian citizens are at risk outside of national borders. The fragmented situation is difficult to control and worries Australia's Government and Security Forces who are concerned about the eventuality of attacks being conducted on national territory. The Australian Prime Minister has entered a similar cooperation agreement with the United States maintaining repression and prevention of terrorism as the central issue.

Michele Tempera

[Americas: Cuba and Venezuela ask for the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles](#)

Luis Posada Carriles was not freed through the payment of a \$350.000 caution as was reported last week. The ex Cia agent, responsible for a series of operations aimed at destabilising Castro's regime, has been found guilty of placing a bomb on Cubana de Aviación's flight DC8 on 16 October 1976 causing the death of 73 people. For this reason both Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez firmly opposed the hypothesis of his being released from prison. This eventuality now seems to have disappeared, however, both Heads of State are now asking for the condemned's extradition to their respective countries so as to be tried in the countries where he acted.

The request is not new, it has been presented to the United States on a series of occasions over the years, however, Palazzo Miraflores has indicated it as a *conditio sine qua* to maintaining diplomatic relations. The rhetoric with which Caracas and La Havana point the finger at the by now 'usual' enemy George W. Bush is far from surprising. The case - which regards Cuba most of all given its having been one of the principal objectives of Cia operations during the period in question - has reinforced the alliance between the two countries.

Over and above the reasons that lead one group to request extradition and another (supported also by the exiles in Miami) to push for his freedom, the episode clearly demonstrates how certain actions can have consequences that are difficult to cancel; 30 years on already difficult diplomatic relations are being further strained. The case is also an interesting example of how a State can operate in foreign territory.

Lucia Conti

Angola: the Angolagate scandal could have repercussions in France

On 6 April the French judge charged with investigating the Angolagate scandal, Philippe Courroye, indicted 42 people including Jean-Christophe Mitterrand (son of the ex President), the businessman Pierre Falcone, and the Russian-Israeli-French Arkady Gaydamak. From case documents it emerges that from the illegal sales of arms (which violated the 90's UN embargo on arms sale to Angola) the Angolan President, José Eduardo Dos Santos, had 37 million dollars deposited on his bank account in Luxembourg. Neither Dos Santos nor any other Angolan civilian or military officer are amongst those indicted.

In 2001 the Angolan President warned France in regards to investigating Falcone and his partner Gaydamak. Luanda considered them to have acted as government agents and as such they were could not be investigated over their roles as intermediaries. The position of Paris in Angola may now become weaker. The latest development in the scandal comes after six months that have seen a cooling in relations between the two states: first the non renewal of Total E&P Angola concessions last October (the French company Total is one of the largest operators in Angola and has made massive investments) and more recently the de facto freezing of the French ambassadors accreditation to the Presidency of Angola. The determination shown by the Presidency in protecting the protagonists of Angolagate appears to show some form of reaction on the part of those who received commissions rather than those who ignored an embargo. Angola is plagued by corruption and the government has vowed on many occasions to introduce greater transparency.

The zeal of Luanda in defending its agents has already struck observers in 2003 when Falcone was named Angola's ambassador to UNESCO thus giving him diplomatic immunity. In view of the coming Parliamentary and Presidential elections, in 2008 and 2009 respectively, Angola's actions could be greater. If this becomes the case the principal channel of 'communications' and pressure could become petrol, an instrument currently more easily managed given the country's improved position on the global energy scene; one that is now much stronger than I was even a few years ago.

Massimiliano Zanghì