

Shared Awareness and Deconfliction in the Mediterranean
SHADE MED 2021

Sharing security, culture and values
for a shared prosperity in the Med

Food for thought



Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI

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The Mediterranean region has been the cradle for the development of many civilizations over the centuries, it has been the center of trade and commerce, but has already seen too many conflicts.

Now, it is time to address fragmentation and instability on its shores. Cooperation and coordination among all the actors involved in the Mediterranean is therefore of paramount importance so as to achieve long-lasting stability and therefore developed prosperity.

The contribution we have tried to provide through this “food for thought” this year aims at inspiring a real debate on how to address such challenges. This volume collects ten independent authors' contributions to be developed at the 10th edition of SHADE MED.

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The opinions expressed in this publication do not represent the policies or points of view of either Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI or European Union.

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Preface

Fabio Agostini

IRINI's Operation Commander, Rear – Admiral

The Mediterranean basin represents a fundamental global crossroad. It is a semi-enclosed sea bordered by over 20 countries. Its shores are home to more than 150 million inhabitants, a figure that doubles during the tourist season. The Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region has a total value estimated at USD 5.6 trillion and generates an annual economic value of USD 450 billion.

It can count on more than 450 ports and terminals that together account for approximately 30% of global sea-borne trade (in volume), 25% of scheduled services on containers, 30% of world oil flows, 65% of the energy flow to EU countries.

Over the last decade, the deep transformations that swept through the wider Mediterranean region have led to new challenges that overlap with old crises. We are witnessing state fragility, humanitarian crises, migration flows, conflicts, security threats, socio-economic inequalities, challenges to the shipping community as well as re-thinking of energy choices and a major shift in the energy field. All of this directly affects the region's security.

The basin presents multiple strategic challenges, significantly worsened by the ongoing pandemic. COVID-19 has brought along the widespread use of the so-called “health and vaccine diplomacy”, with some countries using aid supplies, masks and vaccines to strengthen regional ties and to enhance their own power and global status. Rather than promoting global equity or providing assistance to those most in need, donations have cemented traditional spheres of influence. Timely and universal access to COVID-19 vaccinations will determine whether we can put an end to the pandemic promptly and place the world economy on the trajectory of a resilient recovery or lose many more years of growth, development and opportunities.

In our digital age, we often forget the fragility of interconnected global networks. Three out of the nine main global maritime choke points lie in the region. Most recently, the MV Ever Given blockage of the Suez Canal highlighted the risks the shipping industry faces. A Lloyd's List assessment of the losses due to the blockade estimated that around USD 9.6 billion per day were burned.

Furthermore, peace in Libya, if maintained, will yield huge economic gains, not only for the country, but also for its neighbouring countries, which are expected to reap up to \$162 billion by 2025. This is one of the main results of a recent study by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), entitled: “*Benefits of Peace in Libya: Neighbouring Countries and Beyond*”. This means that the area's stability represents an essential element for global security and economy, and therefore requires cooperation.

Along the Mediterranean's Southern Flank and in the maritime security field, EU and NATO face new geopolitical challenges and trends. Both organizations have repeatedly expressed their willingness to work more closely together to achieve security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area and its neighbourhood. Consequently, they should increase the sharing of information and better coordinate their activities in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. Such cooperation, to be truly effective, should be extended to their respective operations.

The European Union is therefore called upon to step up its comprehensive action in the Mediterranean – the EU's backyard –, as other actors are increasing their footprint to fulfil their own national interests. In this regard, the EU is developing a “strategic compass” to enhance its strategic autonomy, become a stronger global player and define what kind

of security and defence actor it wants to be. Building on a common threat analysis, the strategic compass aims to frame the EU's level of ambition. It will set out what the EU should be able to do and achieve in the area of crisis management and resilience in the next 5-10 years, as well as which capacities and partnerships (including EU-NATO) it will need in that regard. The Strategic Compass will also set the scene to understand what kind of maritime security actor the EU intends to be.

Political will from EU Member States is at the core of any debate about operational effectiveness and credibility. The changing geopolitical landscape is already concerning EU governments and crisis management today and is expected to increasingly do so in the future. Strategic vacuums, technological shifts, hybrid threats, climate change and geopolitical competition will make crisis management in the Mediterranean and elsewhere more challenging.

EUNAVFORMED IRINI is operating at the heart of the Mediterranean Sea. With the main task of ensuring the respect of United Nations' arms embargo regarding Libya, but also of contributing to hindering illegal oil smuggling, human trafficking and of training the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy.

IRINI is only one component of an all-encompassing process involving political, military, economic and humanitarian dimensions agreed upon at the first Berlin Conference on Libya of early 2020. This process represents the European Union's truly holistic approach towards contributing to a long-lasting peace in Libya, remaining equidistant from all the involved parties.

This volume dives deeper into the different trends and challenges discussed above by providing 10 contributions from different independent authors to be considered as "food for thought" to stimulate the participants' reflection and discussion at the 10th SHADE MED conference.

Introduction

Matteo Bressan

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The Mediterranean Sea has always been central in developing war-fighting technology and creating new maritime strategies. Maritime geopolitics belongs to the Mediterranean in the early battles between the Greeks and Persians, the Phoenicians and the Romans. Since mankind started to navigate the waters on the Mediterranean Sea, vastly different civilisations came into contact – Europeans, Africans, and Asians – and along with the exchange of goods, languages, and people came conflict. The Mediterranean Sea was simply an enabler of it all. It is a small basin of water compared to others, nevertheless one of the most relevant.

The Mediterranean is in a central position among cooperating as well as competing societies and nations.

Indeed, Russia and Turkey are increasingly assuming an assertive posture in different parts of the Mediterranean Sea, especially in the Black Sea, the eastern and the central Mediterranean. Through a series of analyses by experts from the academic and research world, this volume aims to provide food for thought to understand the multidimensional challenges which affect the Mediterranean area.

The value of this work is to provide a clear, updated and detailed picture for those who want to understand deeply, not only for expert readers, the great importance of the Mediterranean Sea.

Since that, this volume contextualises the Mediterranean region in the current evolving international framework and analyses the main challenges and unknown factors that will accompany the political transition in Libya, ten years after the Arab Springs.

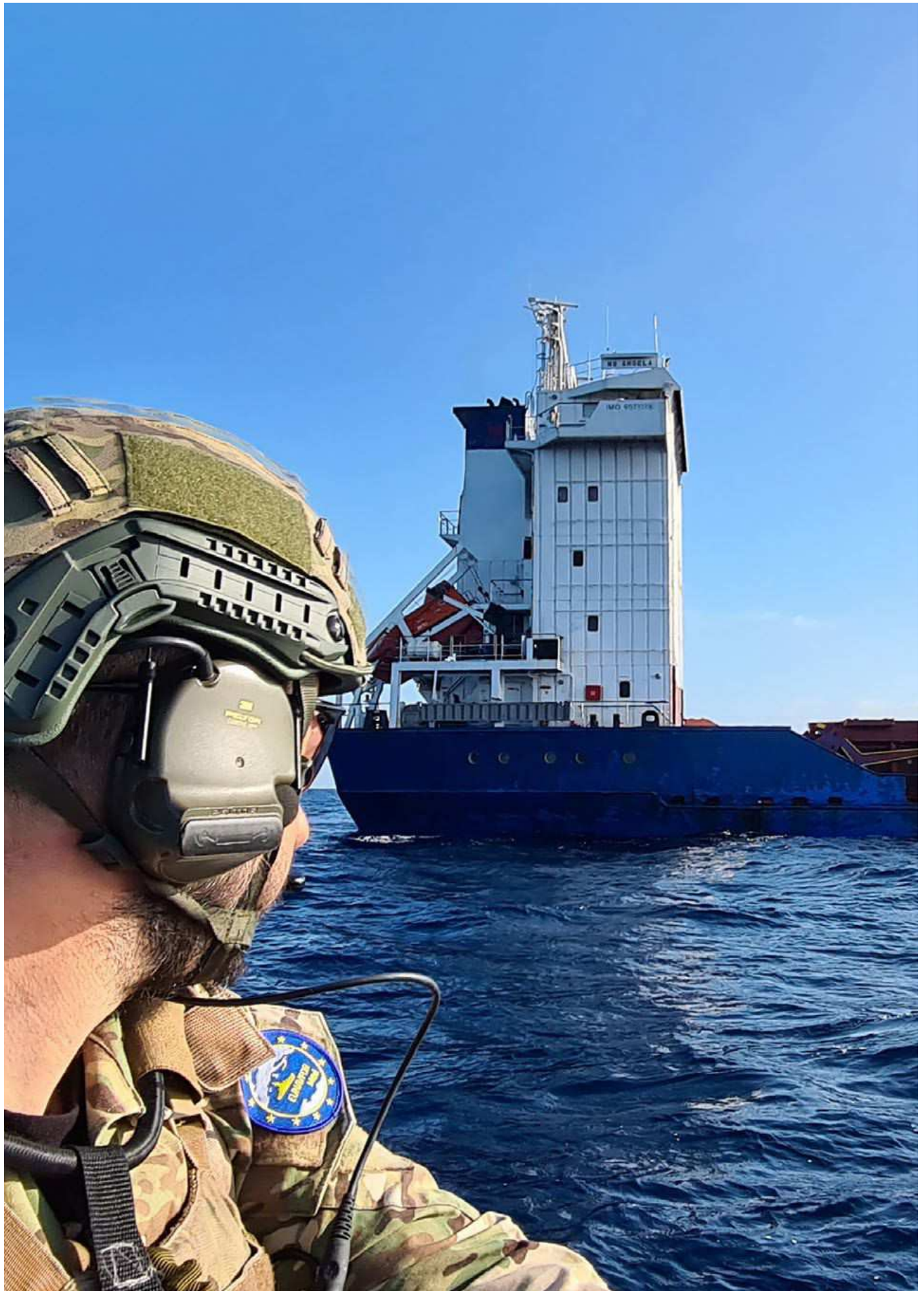
Also, the European Union Strategic Compass should redefine the objectives and capabilities of the EU in future crises management to face new challenges and threats.

Another contribution will address the Biden administration posture in the region, considering the renewed central role conferred by the US administration to NATO and the prospects for concrete collaboration between the European Union and NATO in the Southern Flank.

This edition also analyses how the region plays a central role, especially in the process enabled by the European Green Deal and the energy transition processes.

Finally, for what concerns unconventional challenges, the impact of Covid-19 on migratory flows, freedom of expression and information in the countries of the enlarged Mediterranean area is also deeply analysed.

This edition will provide the reader with a fully comprehensive picture of the future of the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, this area is today relevant more than ever, and it is our duty to dedicate our efforts and attention to it.



In and out of history: the geopolitical role of the Mediterranean in a changing international system

Riccardo Redaelli

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As Fernand Braudel wrote in his masterpiece on the Mediterranean: “the Mediterranean leaves History” (Braudel, 1995, I: 42-7). He correctly pointed out that after being one of the pivots of global history for millennia, and definitely the main trigger of relations between East and West, the basin had lost its centrality following the discovery of America and the circumnavigation of Africa by Bartolomeo Diaz at the end of the 15th century.

Those geographic discoveries opened maritime routes that paved the way for the creation of new maritime empires connected with the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, marginalizing for centuries the small, peripheral Mediterranean. Moving from a classical geopolitical perspective, Sir Halford Mackinder considered those events to be the rise of the “Columbian era”, which led to the domination of the European maritime mercantile empires, epitomized by the superiority of the Royal Navy (Sloan, 2004).

Disconnected from the new routes, our basin thus remained a marginal geostrategic scenario for centuries. At least, until the excavation of the Suez Canal in the second half of the 19th century and the concurrent harsh phase of European Imperialism – well represented by the European powers’ infamous “Scramble for Africa” – allowed the Mediterranean to re-enter history. The actors living around its shores were not the triggers of history anymore, but the basin regained strategic and economic importance as a hub contended between three continents.

Even at the twilight of European primacy after the end of the Second World War, the basin remained a key element within the mechanisms of the bipolar Cold War system. Indeed, in that period, the dominant macro-modelling of the neo-realist approach gave the

Mediterranean basin a marked strategic stillness: it was perceived as the “Southern Flank” of the Atlantic Alliance, a well-defined and easily identifiable geographical space where NATO had a dominant military role.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the following transition towards a post-bipolar phase represented a pivotal change for the balances of the international system, inevitably affecting the strategic and political perception of the region (Xenakis, 2000).

For the United States, it ceased to be the “Southern Flank” of the Alliance to become an important hub for America’s strategic shift towards the Persian Gulf and Asia. The new “peer competitor” of Washington became China, prompting a refocusing of US strategic interests from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region that in turn reduced both the visibility and interests of the US in our basin.

Therefore, during the 90s, the European Union became the main actor responsible for the restructuring and reorganization of the security architecture of the enlarged Mediterranean basin. A task probably too great for a European continent already focused on its own rearrangement and on the enlargement towards the former Warsaw Pact and Soviet space.

In the same period, Brussels launched a set of engagement and confidence-building policies aimed at enhancing its social, political and economic ties with the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, the main goal of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, launched in 1995, was to forge closer relations and to promote political, economic and cultural liberalizations, mostly relying on economic support and soft power (Behr, 2012, 76).

At the same time, however, European countries considered backing the autocratic, yet Western-oriented,

Arab regimes, as an effective way to tackle the rise of radical Islamist movements. The result was a fluid, often confused, “stability partnership” with a region always deemed a secondary priority with respect to the Eastern theatre.

This lack of real strategic attention became even more acute and evident during the last decade, when the EU progressively lost interest in engaging with Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, in particular after the 2008 economic crisis and the rise of the so-called sovereign movements, marked by a distinct Islamophobia and an anti-immigration obsession. They inevitably depicted the Mediterranean as a cradle of threats and challenges: a cultural *limes* to be defended and protected from the new “barbarians at the gate”.

Concurrently, along its southern shores, the poorly planned Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the 2011 Arab uprisings triggered the explosion of particularly violent civil wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya, as well as the rise of various non-state jihadist movements competing in for influence and visibility, the return of Russian activism, and the growth of a violent induced polarization between Shiites and Sunnis. All factors that contributed to a marked destabilization of Middle Eastern security and overlapped the greater geopolitical entropy of the globalization process and the redistribution of power within a changing international system. The most evident result was a much more accelerated deconstruction of balances (perhaps precarious, but still existing) in various Mediterranean sub-regions, as well as the end of the perception of the Mediterranean Sea as an “American lake” - as it had been since the Sixties.

In other words, due to the perceived decline of US power (or at least a decline of its interest in the region), the basin has become “challengeable” again, favouring bolder initiatives by regional or external actors. From a geopolitical perspective, because of wars, riots, internal clashes within the Islamic world, migrations and the Chinese attempt to connect this sea to its Belt and

Road Initiative, the most important consequence is that the region is now gaining a new centrality.

However, the most peculiar aspect of such rediscovered centrality lies in the fact that it does not seem like a sought-after centrality, but, on the contrary, a sort of unexpected and unintended one. A consequence of the multiple crises that cross the basin, rather than the specific will of its regional actors (Redaelli, Palgrave). Historically, tensions and differences at all levels (cultural, religious, identity-related, social and economic) did not prevent the Mediterranean from being an osmotic liminal space for a great part of its long history. It was only in the last decades that the perception of the same basin as a barrier, as an identity-related frontier, became stronger as a result of the already mentioned traumatic factors and events.

Besides, this plurality of terrible conflicts and crises has in some ways hidden the economic and commercial trends evolving within the basin, such as its role in global trade or the creation of new commercial corridors (like the Chinese Road and Belt Initiative) that are forging a new centrality of the Mediterranean also from the geo-economic and maritime economy perspectives. Despite accounting for only 1% of the world’s oceans, in fact, this sea generates around 15% of global maritime traffic and 20% of the related economic value: it is a fundamental global socio-economic crossroad (GRID Arendal, 2013).

Even from an energy perspective, our basin is playing a growing significant role thanks to the discovery of giant natural gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean. According to United States Geological Survey estimates, the Levant Basin – notably the waters of Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine – contains 122.4 trillion cubic feet of technically recoverable gas (Bowlus, 2020). Their exploitation plays therefore an extremely important role at both geo-economic and geopolitical levels, as the eastern part of the sea may aspire to become not only an important hub for the transit of natural gas towards Europe, but a direct provider of energy itself.



1 – Map of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region; source: *World Bank. Beyond Scarcity: Water Security in the Middle East and North Africa*, World Bank: Washington, DC, USA, 2017; p. 233, CC License.

For better or for worse, the Mediterranean is back, fully entangled in current global history. Unfortunately, the perception of challenges within the enlarged borders of the European Union, the economic crisis of the last decade and the effects of the pandemic have weakened any attempt to consistently articulate a European regional security project. This lack of vision and interest provided room for nationalistic logics that have exposed the Union to diverging policies, unilateral initiatives and to a downturn of the traditional engagement and support policies launched soon after the end of the Cold War (Colombo and Soler I Lecha, 2019).

Yet, at the same time, the balance of the Mediterranean basin is currently shaken by a plurality of other trends and phenomena that go beyond the traditional geopolitical dynamics here analysed. Among the most evident ones: the demographic alteration occurring between the two shores of the sea and the role played by the so-called “bulge generation” in MENA countries, with multifarious consequences and implications for regional stability and North-South relations.

In conclusion, the wider Mediterranean basin is presently experiencing the controversial unfolding of a

complex entanglement of political, economic and security crises that are shaking the bases of our socio-political and institutional systems, and often translate into conflicts based on religious, ethnic or tribal identities. However, it is too easy to focus only on the crises and polarizing trends tormenting our basin. On the contrary, it is important that Mediterranean European member states, such as Italy, emphasise the potential positive centrality of this sea, underlining the importance of creating a new long-term strategy to address the imbalances and the elements of instability of the region. A vision that should not be only based on the interests of some single actor, relying on the outdated strategic vision of the zero-sum game theory. It is rather essential to envisage and promote a holistic vision that might stimulate collective human security for all the Mediterranean peoples and for the areas gravitating around this sea.

Indeed, the only rational answer to seismic, epochal changes, is trying to govern and adapt to them, not to ignore them. Being aware that the Mediterranean Sea is here, within history, to again play an important role in the future international system.

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EU-NATO cooperation in the Southern Flank

Amb. Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo
President of the NATO Defense College Foundation

We are facing a dangerous, unpredictable and fluid international environment, a constant challenge, and NATO has to find ways to respond to security threats. A combination of cultural factors, social, ethnic and religious issues, political and economic instability affects the current international situation. New menaces are emerging from many directions: from state and non-state actors to terrorist, cyber and hybrid attacks.

Today, international security and crisis management need more than ever a multidimensional and global approach. The very concept of security is not only tied to the military dimension of each individual nations, but is a transnational need that calls into question international organisation and a very different set of skills.

Since 1949, through seven decades, NATO managed to adapt effectively to the evolution of the international landscape. From the beginning, the Alliance's project had a great scope and ambition: to put together North America and Europe, what was called the free world, the most relevant democracies globally, with the aim to defend common values and shared interests against Communism and the threat of the Soviet Union. The preamble of NATO's founding Treaty says that the Alliance was established to promote the stability and wellbeing of the North Atlantic area and its people. Indeed, it responded promptly to historic events and addressed the related challenges and threats effectively.

Nowadays, NATO is still there and the fact itself means something. It has 30 members and has survived successfully through many crucibles: a Cold War that lasted for two generations, Bosnia, Kosovo, 9\11, Afghanistan, just to mention some important dates. The crises in the Balkans and in Afghanistan led to the

adoption of new Strategic Concepts in 1999 and 2010. Notably, with the one in 1999, NATO transformed itself. From an instrument for collective defence, it has become an instrument of collective security. It embraced the idea of intervening also outside the Euro-Atlantic area under UN mandate and wherever events would breed potential risks to the security of the Member States.

Particularly relevant to understanding how the Alliance was turning into a global policy instrument is the item 24 of the 1999 Strategic Concept, which sets out the challenges NATO may face. "Alliance security interests can be affected by other risks of a wider nature, including acts of terrorism, sabotage and organized crime, and by the disruption of the flow of vital resources. The uncontrolled movement of large numbers of people, particularly as a consequence of armed conflicts, can also pose problems for security and stability affecting the Alliance".

NATO is therefore aware that the military alone cannot solve complex international crises. To be successful, it must necessarily cooperate and interact with the civilian dimension. Following this trend, with the Strategic Concept of 2010, Crisis Management was added to the other two NATO's core tasks, Collective Defence and Cooperative Security.

A multidimensional approach known as "Comprehensive Approach" will be instrumental in fulfilling these pillars. The expression refers to the interaction between the political, civil and military dimensions while planning and conducting joint operations. It should be achieved through the exchange of information and lessons learned, carrying out joint training phases, delivering public messages, and involving international organisations, governmental and

non-governmental institutions, as well as academia, in military planning. All these stakeholders may be engaged or interested in solving a specific international crisis, providing NATO with the wider knowledge required to better understand different challenges and environments.

In all instances the transatlantic bond worked successfully: Americans, Canadians and Europeans acting hand in hand and becoming fully interoperable. That is why we use to say that it is the most successfully political-military Alliance in history. Seven decades have proved that the United States and Europe are a winning ticket. Yet, at the same time, it is clear that the world is changing fast, perhaps too fast, and we cannot live on past glories.

The deterioration of security in the Mediterranean, due in part to the collapse of the regional order that existed before the Arab Spring, has made the Middle East and North Africa particularly unstable. The 10-year crisis in Syria, as well as the fragmentation in Libya, have had direct consequences on Europe. Terrorist organisations and private military companies have proliferated, and those very countries are the point of origin of foreign fighters and migratory flows.

For its part, NATO has devoted its attention and agenda to these types of challenges too. Since the Warsaw Summit in 2016, the Alliance put the mission of projecting stability outside its borders at the top of its agenda, then developing also a “Framework for the South” as a strategy for the stabilisation of the North African and the Middle Eastern regions. A “Package on the South” was created as well with a variety of political and practical cooperation initiatives that aimed at the establishment of a more coherent approach towards the area.

Today, NATO is committed to continue to adapt in order to be ready for a concrete and proportionate response to any kind of potential threats. To this end, though, restructuring and boosting the Alliance’s attention and commitment towards its Southern Flank will be mandatory tasks. A wide spectrum of risks and

hybrid threats emerged from this side of the world, and a new arc of crisis going from the East to the South is looming. A wide spectrum of new actions and challenging instruments are at play, spanning from military force and economic pressure to technology, crime, terrorism, humanitarian and religious dynamics, intelligence, sabotage and disinformation. Hybrid warfare too is not limited to the traditional battlefield: it is in the cyberspace as well and exploits the potential of modern media to isolate, weaken, and erode the legitimacy of the opponent. These actions are typical of States, but also of non-state actors such as militias, terrorist and criminal groups.

Following the identification and definition of hybrid warfare, NATO acted to strengthen its capabilities and adopted a holistic understanding of the challenges it would face both in the East and the South, with the aim to remain “strong, ready and reactive, to be able to face the present and future challenges from wherever they come”.

The 2014 NATO Summit in Wales and the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw have shown how NATO and the European Union, through their historic joint statement, were able to respond to Russia’s assertive attitude and to the challenges coming from the Southern Flank. From those years on, the cooperation between NATO and the EU continued to significantly evolve in order to keep pace with the new common security environment: the European Union is and will evermore be a unique and indispensable partner for the Alliance, and not only to facilitate the mobility of forces on the field.

We should remember that the European Union started to have permanent bodies dedicated to foreign policy and defence in Brussels only since 2000, and its first High Representative was Javier Solana, a former Secretary General of NATO. In other words, it is a rather recent development.

Up to 2004, we witnessed the big enlargement of both organisations and regular contacts took place between the North Atlantic Council and the Political



1 – A first Joint Declaration signed in Warsaw in July 2016 identified seven concrete areas for enhanced cooperation between the EU and NATO:

1. COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS;
2. OPERATIONAL COOPERATION INCLUDING AT SEA AND ON MIGRATION;
3. CYBER SECURITY AND DEFENCE;
4. DEFENCE CAPABILITIES;
5. DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH;
6. EXERCISES;
7. SUPPORTING EASTERN AND SOUTHERN PARTNERS' CAPACITY- BUILDING EFFORTS.

and Security Committee. A crucial agreement allowed also the European Union to autonomously launch an operation and automatically have the support of NATO assets and capabilities. The EU-led operation

in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Operation Althea, was the concrete result of such an agreement.

As a matter of fact, the Balkan region is where the cooperation between the EU and NATO has been stronger: it has been the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYROM and Albania.

After a period of rather uneventful relations linked in large part to political problems due to the enlargement, the situation then improved with the 2014 NATO Summit Wales. In that occasion, NATO Secretary General and the EU High Representative decided upon a large number of issues where the two organizations should cooperate.

What is to be kept in mind is that, between the European Union and the Alliance, the membership is largely overlapping. Besides, there should be no duplication because the taxpayers should not pay twice.

Finally, we are going in the direction of an international environment both difficult and fragmented. There is a need for a comprehensive agreement, some kind of division of labour where the added value of convergence and cooperation should prevail. In this sense, the Mediterranean is an ideal space where our democracies should go beyond a purely technical attitude joining forces to face common challenges and opportunities.



Libya's main challenges: the local political scenario in an evolving regional context

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For years Libya appeared to be on the edge of a precipice, trapped within a disruptive intermittent military confrontation between rival factions, socio-political turmoil and a still ongoing economic crisis that erupted after the fall of Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī's regime in 2011.

In October 2020, the achievement of a ceasefire agreement signed by the warring parties and the following UN-mediated political talks led the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum – which brought together 75 participants as representatives of the country's multiple constituencies – to elect a three-person Presidency Council headed by Mohamed Mnefi and a Prime Minister, Abdulhamid Dabaiba, with the task of forming a Government of National Unity (GNU).

After having obtained the confidence vote of the divided Parliament and the agreement of the two parallel governments to the transfer of powers in March 2021, as well as a general consent of the respective military coalitions to collaborate with the new executive, the government now aims to inaugurate a new, possibly historic milestone in the fragile Libyan context. However, while this represents a tangible step towards the reunification of the country under a new executive authority, it does not mean that the next moves will be easy. There are still many challenges facing the new government to move the political transition forward and carry out the UN-backed roadmap that should lead to the general elections scheduled for December 24, 2021.

First of all, there is a lack of consensus on the constitutional framework for elections, since the country has neither a constitutional basis for the vote nor an electoral law¹. A condition that, together with other structural obstacles, risks derailing the fragile political process. Indeed, there are the well-known political, military and socio-economic problems affecting Libya since the fall of the previous regime.

Since 2014, the political and geographical division of the country, based mainly on conflicts over financial disputes and competition for the allocation of state funds among rival groups, had made any attempts at reunification ineffective. Yet, some steps have been taken in a positive direction: in February 2021, the Tripoli government agreed to assume all the parallel eastern authorities' expenditures, including the Haftar-led forces' salaries and operating costs, obtaining, in exchange, the east-based government's promise to stop its use of side revenue sources². At the same time, the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) decided to financially support a group of banks based in eastern Libya.

These developments fit in line with one of the most important priorities of the new executive, which is reunifying the country and its divided institutions, including the military and CBL, as well as fostering reconciliation after years of chaos and conflict. In this unstable condition, persisting controversy on the resources' allocation could put the political situation into a dramatic deadlock. Especially considering

1 Dorda Mohamed, Crowley Oliver, Moshashai Daniel, *Inside Libya*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V., May 2021, pp. 5-6, <https://www.kas.de/documents/282499/282548/Inside+Libya+May+Edition.pdf/a438aec1-9abe-3bff-6791-a2f44373ed4a?version=1.0&t=1620055200819>.

2 International Crisis Group (ICG), *Libya Turns the Page*, Middle East and North Africa Report n. 222, 21 May 2021, p. 8, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/222-libya-turns-the-page.pdf>.

that the country continues to be afflicted by a harsh economic crisis that has been worsening the Libyans' living conditions through the last decade.

After the oil blockade was lifted in September 2020, oil production has almost returned to pre-blockade levels, which is promising news for a more general improvement of the country's economic and social conditions³. Nevertheless, there are multiple difficulties in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, improving the delivery of basic services and rebooting the economy. The new government might find a consensus over the management of Libya's economy, a challenge that is currently difficult to overcome due to the feuds that over time have contributed to make the two sides skeptical about the possibility of re-establishing a central authority.

In the security field, the emergence of two rival military coalitions in 2014 and the proliferation of a plethora of militias make the feasibility of establishing a unified military command structure extremely difficult: beside the various attempts to launch a credible security sector reform (SSR), the reality on the ground is that militias continue to fortify and protect their positions in western Libya – sometimes representing part of the state apparatus without any accountability –, while the East continues to be in the hands of various groups and militias only apparently reunited under the name of Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA).

Even more crucial is the issue of the withdrawal of foreign military forces and private military contractors that is currently stalling, at least until now, since the summer of 2021. The presence of foreign troops represents a fundamental backbone for the military coalitions supporting the two rival Libyan factions:

Russian-backed mercenaries alongside the Haftar forces, Turkey-backed Syrian fighters on Tripoli's side, and a vast range of African armed groups that have been operating in Libya since the start of the conflict (the UN estimates some 20,000 foreign fighters and mercenaries still being in Libya)⁴.

The withdrawal of foreign fighters, which was agreed upon as part of a ceasefire reached in October 2020, is a crucial pre-condition for having secure elections and a stable political situation. This clearly emerged during the second UN-sponsored conference held June 23 in Berlin, when Western powers agreed to put an end to international meddling and on a gradual process of withdrawal of foreign troops and mercenaries from the country⁵. The new executive might consider that the resolution of this issue will require further consensus-building and strong international support in order to avoid a renewed rising of tensions among local actors and regional powers, whose continuous interferences are the main external challenges the GNU has to face in the following months.

Regional and international actors such as Turkey – which backed Tripoli-based militias and the military coalition allied with the former Government of National Accord (GNA) – on one side, and Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Russia – which all covertly supported Haftar-led forces – on the other, continue to weigh, as in the past, on the Libyan theater, dragging the conflict into regional tensions. Although the two sides' foreign backers officially declared their support for the new government, the risk of renewed hostilities at a later stage remains, triggered by their antagonistic interests in the country.

3 Mezran Karim, Melcangi Alessia, "Economic Interests, Political Conflicts, and External Interferences. The Complex Interlocking of the Libyan Crisis", in *The East Mediterranean and Regional Security: A Transatlantic Dialogue*, FPRI and Heinrich Boll Stiftung (Istanbul and Washington DC), December 2020, pp. 1-2, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/11/complex-interlocking-libya-crisis/>.

4 UN Security Council, *Continued Violations of Arms Embargo, Delays in Withdrawing Foreign Mercenaries Threatening Hard-Won Gains in Libya, Special Envoy Warns Security Council*, 21 May 2021, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14526.doc.htm>.

5 Al-Jazeera, *Libya gov't hopeful mercenaries will withdraw 'within days'*, 23 June 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/23/libyan-fm-hopes-mercenaries-pull-out-after-progress-in-berlin>.

Despite the ceasefire agreement, Turkey and Russia continue to maintain a significant military presence in Libya, facing each other in the Sirte-Al Jufra region, a strategically important Oil Crescent, accounting for more than half of Libya's crude exports, considered to be a "red line" not to cross for both the rival groups⁶. In this frozen context, Turkey is strengthening its presence at the Wutiya air military base, a few hundred miles south of Tripoli. Considering the amount of military and technological assets provided by the Turkish forces, this appears to be a long-term presence, rather than a temporary one. Thanks to the defense and maritime agreements signed with Libya's former GNA, Ankara can hardly consider the possibility of withdrawing its troops as a preliminary binding condition for continuation of the peace process.

For its part, Russia is reciprocating Turkey's moves, scaling up its military presence at the Al Jufra base, in central Libya, a few hundred miles south of the city of Sirte. Russian-backed Wagner forces currently represent Haftar's main foreign military backing (reportedly funded by the UAE) in areas under his control, which include eastern, central and parts of southern Libya⁷.

Differently from these stances, Egypt has bet on relaunching the diplomatic path, appearing as the most compromise-seeking actor among the Libyan general's backers⁸. The Egyptian government, indeed, seems



1 – International representatives at the Second Berlin Conference on Libya which was held on June 23, 2021

willing to support the new Libyan executive authority not only through official statements but also with several agreements signed with the GNU in fundamental sectors of interest for both the countries (energy, communications, infrastructure, investments, and transport).

In this context, the UAE began withdrawing its military equipment from Libya, and relocating it at a military base on the Egyptian border. If it apparently seems committed to recalibrating its foreign policy priorities, taking a sort of "strategic pause" regarding its active involvement in the Libyan crisis and officially confirming its support to the new executive authority in Libya, it is rumored that the UAE continues its disruptive policies on the ground⁹.

If the necessity of pulling back foreign forces from the country is essential to preserve the ceasefire's long-term viability and the roadmap toward elections, at the same

6 Badi Emadeddin, *To advance its own interests, Turkey should now help stabilize Libya*, War on the Rocks, 24 May 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/05/to-advance-its-own-interests-turkey-should-now-help-stabilize-libya/>.

7 Harchaoui Jalel, *The pendulum: how Russia sways its way to more influence in Libya*, War on the Rocks, 7 January 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/01/the-pendulum-how-russia-sways-its-way-to-more-influence-in-libya/>.

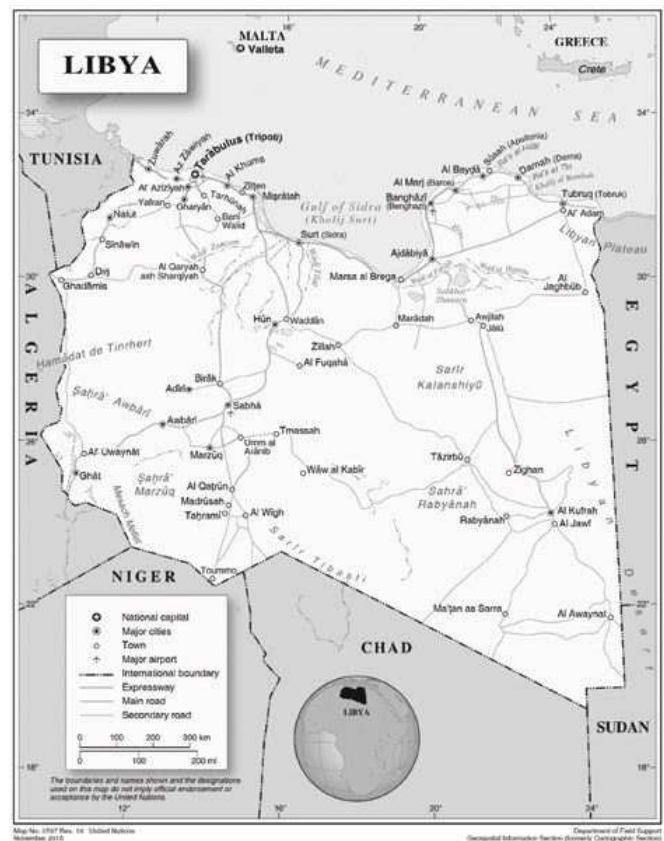
8 Melcangi Alessia, *Egypt recalibrated its strategy in Libya because of Turkey*, Atlantic Council, 1 June 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/egypt-recalibrated-its-strategy-in-libya-because-of-turkey/>.

9 Fattah Zainab, Noueihed Lin, Westall Sylvia, *UAE steps back from wars as Biden reasserts mideast role*, Bloomberg, 28 February 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-28/uae-steps-back-from-foreign-wars-as-biden-reasserts-mideast-role>.

time it is important to consider the consequences of the possible reconfiguration of alliances that is currently unfolding among regional actors. We are indeed witnessing a de-escalation between the war's main foreign protagonists – Turkey and Qatar on one side, and Egypt, the UAE and Saudi Arabia on the other –, which can strengthen a constructive approach to a peaceful settlement in Libya.

Looking at the regional level, the restoration of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain with Qatar, signed in January 2021 with the Al-Ula agreement, along with the present tentative rapprochement between Egypt and Turkey, could pave the way for a credible international convergence behind a political path forward. In this context, the Biden administration, which has apparently triggered a realignment of the international and regional actors dealing with Libya, can now push for a temporary efficient ceasefire monitoring before UNSMIL finalizes a permanent mission¹⁰, as stated in Berlin II.

The re-engagement of the US could foster a more active and coordinated role of the EU in the Libyan dossier, which should work to protect and reinforce the new administration's unifying authority over the country¹¹. Too long distracted by internal rivalries and unilateral interests, the EU needs to rediscover a collaborative approach working at multiple levels: at the domestic one, it should converge in supporting the UN-backed process in Libya, preventing the present difficulties from derailing the election process; at the regional level, the EU should contribute to defuse tensions in the area, relaunching multilateral dialogues among regional players. The recent rapprochement between Italy and France, despite their political divergences, and their common support for the ceasefire are a sign that something could be about to change in the area.



The ongoing EU Operation IRINI¹² – established to enforce the arms embargo at sea – might be instrumental to revitalizing the European Common Security and Defense Policy, providing a base for a new European collaboration in solving the Libyan crisis, as well as creating the conditions for a permanent ceasefire.

The appointment of an interim unity government in Libya represents a historic achievement for a conflict-torn country such as Libya. But this success has to be strengthened by a clear roadmap based on solid ground and by a strong international commitment to supporting it. If that does not happen, all the challenges remaining unaddressed could risk dragging the country into the abyss of war again.

10 Fishman Ben, El Gomati Anas, *Making Libya's Berlin Process Work*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 21 June 2021, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/making-libyas-berlin-process-work>.

11 Megerisi Tarek, *Plot twist: How Europe should deal with Libya's new government*, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), 12 February 2021, <https://ecfr.eu/article/plot-twist-how-europe-should-deal-with-libyas-new-government/>.

12 Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI website, <https://www.operationirini.eu/>.

Towards a strategic compass for the EU

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The European Union has made tangible steps forward in security and defence in recent years. The EU Global Strategy put in place a new strategic rationale for the EU and it stressed the importance for member states to invest in security and defence in order to better respond to a more hostile world. All around Europe are crises. Russia's actions in Eastern Europe, Turkey's destabilising efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Syria and Libya conflicts, the insecurity in the Sahel, and violent piracy in the Gulf of Guinea are all worrying developments. In particular, the Mediterranean is the location for growing geopolitical concerns. Clearly, the EU is not living in the "secure, prosperous and free" world so confidently proclaimed in the 2003 European Security Strategy.

To meet these challenges, the EU has set out, since 2016, to enhance its strategic autonomy², defence capabilities, operational readiness and technological robustness. Today, there is a veritable alphabet soup of initiatives from "CARD" to "PESCO", "EPF" to "MPCC" and the "EDF". Even though the Permanent Structured Cooperation, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, the European Defence Fund and the European Peace Facility are much needed tools for EU security and defence, there is still a lack of focus on what the Union wants to achieve in operational terms. Enter the "Strategic Compass".

Facing threats as a Union

With a process that began in mid-2020, the EU's Strategic Compass is an opportunity for the Union's member states to answer some basic questions: where, why, how and with what means should the EU act in security and defence? Precise answers to these questions have not been given to the EU's and member states' defence planners, at least not in light of the current security context and geopolitical competition. Due in March 2022, the Strategic Compass should give clear guidance on how the EU could be a more robust crisis manager, a generator of resilience, a more capable actor and a reliable partner.

However, the Strategic Compass is more than just a guidance document or "white book" for EU security and defence. It is also supposed to generate greater strategic solidarity among EU member states for the threats facing Europe. When the EU pushed for the Compass in mid-2020, it did so fully recognising that its member states have different national threat perceptions. Indeed, European security looks and feels different depending on where you stand: Dublin's threat perception is different to Riga's.

Of course, the Strategic Compass will not create an EU strategic culture overnight but it is a start. This is why before the concrete work on the Compass, started in January 2021, EU member states agreed to first conduct a threat analysis. The analysis detailed the threats facing the Union over the next 5 to 10 years with a full

¹ The ideas expressed in this chapter do not necessarily reflect those of the EUISS or the European Union.

² Sabatino, E. (ed) "The Quest for European Strategic Autonomy – A Collective Reflection", 2020, Istituto Affari Internazionali, <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/quest-european-strategic-autonomy-collective-reflection>.

360 degree outlook. This was a first for the EU in that member states did not agree line-by-line to the conclusions of the analysis. The threat analysis is not a politically agreed document but an independent intelligence product elaborated by the Union's Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC)³, in cooperation with the intelligence services of the member states.

The threat analysis was delivered to EU member states in November 2020 and, because it is understandably a classified document not available in the public domain, the precise conclusions are not known⁴. However, a major conclusion was that the next 5 to 10 years will be increasingly hostile for the EU⁵. Threats include water and food insecurity, climate change, migratory pressures, war and military conflicts, failing states, regional power expansion, hybrid threats, terrorism and more. With the threat analysis in hand, the work on the Strategic Compass could begin – the analysis raised a sense of urgency, detailed shared threats and outlined the security parameters in which the process should proceed.

Four baskets as the points on the Compass

Compasses have four points and a needle, but the EU Strategic Compass is not comprised of the usual points: North, East, South and West. Instead, the Strategic Compass points to four core features of EU security and defence: crisis management, resilience, capabilities and partnerships. The four points or “baskets” seek to provide greater operational clarity for defence planners in the EU. On crisis management, what specific military operations and civilian missions should the EU plan for and what geographical areas or zones should be

a priority? On resilience, what more can the EU do to protect critical infrastructure and supply chains which are vital for defence? On capabilities, how can the EU prioritise the most pressing capabilities and profit from emerging defence technologies? On partnerships, how can the Union better engage with regional organisations and like-minded states and organisations to advance its security and defence interests?

Of course, dividing the Strategic Compass between these four baskets is in reality artificial as, for example, one cannot talk about military operations without considering what capabilities will be required. Although the artificial division is required for the purposes of drafting the document, it will be important to keep in mind cross-cutting issues such as hybrid threats, cyber defence and ensuring that the EU can secure its interests on the global commons (maritime, space, air and cyber). The four baskets should help organise the Compass' conclusions, but the Compass will only make a difference if it is concrete and geared to meeting the collective challenges identified in the Threat Analysis.

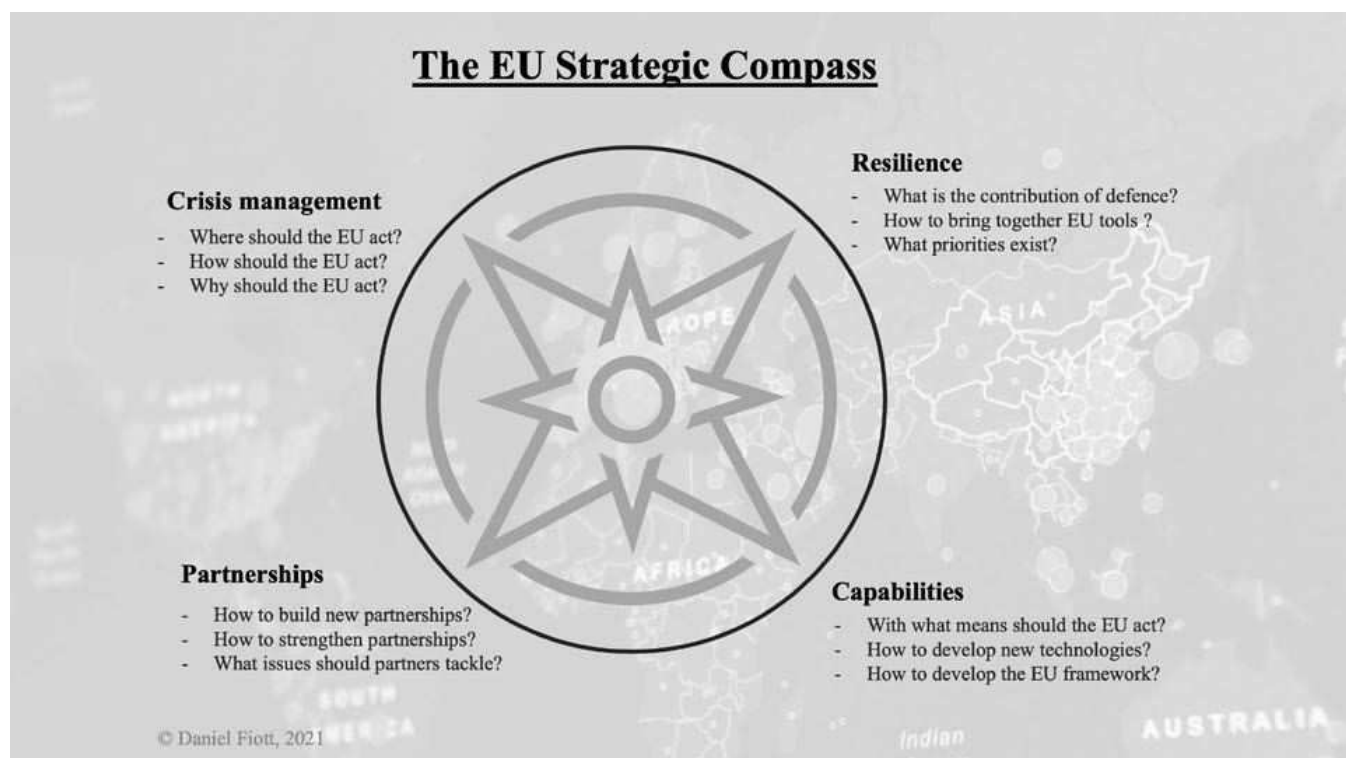
Since January 2021, the Strategic Compass process has advanced rapidly. Not only have the European External Action Service (EEAS) produced a scoping paper, but the member states have also - both alone and jointly - submitted non-papers to detail the direction they believe EU security and defence should head. Accompanying these papers have been virtual and physical exchanges including a series of ministerial meetings, gatherings in the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and in the EU Military Committee (EUMC), and EU member state-sponsored workshops⁶. Each meeting is

3 The SIAC is comprised of the EU Intelligence Centre and the EU Military Staff Intelligence branch.

4 European External Action Service, “Memo - Questions and answers: Threat Analysis - a background for the Strategic Compass”, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020_11_20_memo_questions_and_answers_-_threat_analysis_-_copy.pdf.

5 Fiott, D., “Uncharted territory? Towards a common threat analysis and a Strategic Compass for EU security and defence”, EUISS Brief, No. 16, July 2020, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/uncharted-territory-towards-common-threat-analysis-and-strategic-compass-eu-security-and>.

6 For example, the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) has organised six specific workshops on the global commons, crisis management, defence industry, capabilities and security of supply. See here: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/tags/strategic-compass>.



1 – The Four Baskets of the Strategic Compass.

designed to volunteer new ideas, set realistic parameters and discuss priorities in EU security and defence.

These meetings have not just been talking shops, however. In fact, to date many have led to new ideas in each of the four baskets such as the need for a joint civil-military doctrine and regular joint exercises; creating an EU cyber defence unit and a 5,000-strong EU force and enablers; exploring the use of Article 44 to allow a group of willing member states to lead on a military operation; permitting the EU Military Staff and MPCC to conduct advanced planning; expanding the Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP) concept to other maritime zones of interest for the EU; conducting air and naval live exercises, and drafting an EU space and defence strategy and more. New ideas, but nothing has been agreed in stone yet.

Looking for direction

Despite the enthusiasm with which the EEAS and EU member states are engaging in the Strategic Compass

process, the real challenge facing the EU is not so much the quality or quantity of new ideas. Indeed, what will matter is how far EU member states are willing to give life to the words that will eventually end up on the pages of the Strategic Compass. The first test will be when the first draft of the Compass is presented to member states in November 2021. As the Strategic Compass will be adopted by member states, there is a risk that ambition will be watered down or that it will not be up to meeting the challenges outlined in the Threat Analysis. Certainly, given the geopolitical changes underway, the EU cannot afford to repeat the disappointments of the past twenty years in security and defence.⁷

In this regard, it is necessary for the Strategic Compass to be embedded in national defence planning processes - governments must have ownership. With CARD and PESCO, member states have already acquiesced to an unprecedented intrusion in their defence

⁷ Fiott, D. (ed.) *The CSDP in 2020: The EU's legacy and Ambition in Security and Defence* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2020), <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/csdp-2020>.



planning processes since 2016. Following the May 2021 meeting of defence ministers, it seems as though the Strategic Compass will also be subject to specific timelines for implementation and a regular political review⁸. The Compass itself or even the Threat Analysis may be revised in 5 years' time. This is a positive way

of keeping up the political pressure and to ensure that commitments made at the EU level are not suddenly side-lined in capitals. Given the structural changes and security challenges facing the EU, it seems unlikely that its member states will have the luxury of letting time wear down initiatives agreed in Brussels.

⁸ Council of the EU, "Council Conclusions on Security and Defence", 8396/21, Brussels, 10 May 2021, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8396-2021-INIT/en/pdf>.

US policy on the Mediterranean and the role of PMCs

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Introduction

AS US foreign policy rebalances towards China, President Biden described his approach to the Middle East in the interim national security strategic guidance as “right-sizing” American military presence “to the level required to disrupt international terrorist networks, deter Iranian aggression, and protect other vital US interests.”¹ While US policy to the Middle East is still being fleshed out, it’s clear the return to the nuclear deal negotiations with Iran will be a chief priority. Where does this leave the Mediterranean, a strategically vital region in NATO’s south? What does this mean for proxy forces, especially so-called Russian PMCs, private military companies that have instrumental especially in Libya? In part, these issues have to fall under the broader policy towards Russia.

Recent US steps

President Biden’s overall approach to the Mediterranean remains unclear. Tony Blinken told the House Foreign Affairs Committee in March that the US

will remain “fully engaged” on the Cyprus issue and expressed concern about Ankara’s behaviour towards Greece.² Greek Defense Minister Nikos Panagiotopoulos recently described military ties with the US as being at an “all-time high”, adding that the US and Greece will likely update a bilateral security agreement this summer. This could lead to more American military missions in the region.³ Biden recognized the Armenian genocide of 1915 and delayed calling Turkish president Erdogan until late April; on June 14th the two leaders will meet to “discuss their differences”.⁴ Still, these steps fall short of a coherent policy.

US Syria policy remains under review, though early public messages suggest focussing on cross-border humanitarian aid. Yet as Biden ends the license for the Delta crescent energy company in northeast Syria, Russian energy companies are poised to gain more control over Syrian oil. Thus, the Kremlin is set to further increase its influence in Syria, and then, the Mediterranean.⁵ It is bad news on many fronts, including for Syria’s humanitarian situation.

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- 1 President Joseph R. Biden Jr., Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, White House, March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>
 - 2 Tasos Kokkinidis, “Blinken Slams Turkey’s Provocative Actions Against Greece,” *Greekreporter.com*, March 11, 2021 <https://greekreporter.com/2021/03/11/blinken-slams-turkey-provocative-actions-against-greece/>
 - 3 John Vandiver, “US and Greece Working on Deal to Expand Military Cooperation in the Mediterranean,” *Military.com* May 15 2021 <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/05/15/us-and-greece-working-deal-expand-military-cooperation-mediterranean.html>
 - 4 Readout of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Call with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey,” April 23, 2021 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/23/readout-of-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-call-with-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-of-turkey/>
 “Biden, Erdogan to discuss their differences next week - White House,” *Reuters* June 7, 2021 <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/biden-erdogan-discuss-their-differences-next-week-white-house-2021-06-07/>
 - 5 Kenneth R. Rosen, “How Delta Crescent Fell Short in Trump’s ‘Keep the Oil’ Plan in Syria,” *The Daily Beast*, May 31, 2021 <https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-delta-crescent-fell-short-in-trumps-keep-the-oil-plan-in-syria>
 Aamer Madhani, *The Associated Press*, “Biden ending Trump OK for US oil company in Syria, says official,”

In July, the UN Security Council voted on humanitarian aid in Syria. While the worst fears of Western officials did not materialize – Moscow ultimately did not block the last remaining cross-border corridor despite earlier threats to do so – the Kremlin also came out the biggest winner. The language of the approved resolution advanced Moscow's strategic goals, while Russia will now get an opportunity to discuss cross-border aid again in six months. The West could not open any new crossings while Russia got to look as if it also compromised simply by not taking the most extreme position.

By comparison, engagement in Libya increased. In May, Biden named Richard Norland, US ambassador to Libya, as taking on an additional role as special envoy ahead of Libya's elections scheduled for this year's end. Norland for his part emphasized that "mercenaries" is one of the problems facing Libya's interim government. In a recent interview, he discussed details of his contacts with Russian officials about the Wagner group in Libya whom he said now acknowledge their presence; he also stressed that Turkey is ready to negotiate the withdrawal of the Syrian mercenaries they sent to Libya.⁶ His comments suggest an interest in seeing all para-military forces leaving Libya. An estimated 2,000 members of the Wagner, a Russian PMC (Private Military Company) owned by Yeginiy Prigozhin, an oligarch close to Putin, remain in Libya with advanced fighter aircraft in addition to Ankara-backed fighters.

Moscow and the Mediterranean

Moscow for its part remains focused on the region. For the first time since 1972, Russia now has a major military base on the Mediterranean as it continues

to upgrade its military posture and project power. As part of its global geopolitical efforts to reduce American and more broadly Western influence, Moscow seeks greater freedom of movement; it will continue to look for warm water port access in Libya to bolster its standing. Unsurprisingly, Moscow was unhappy with the increased American presence in the Mediterranean in late 2020, which Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova described as "anti-Russian nature".⁷ In the same vein, senior Russian officials protested US Air Force flying over the last year bomber task force missions in the high North, Baltic and the Black Sea. In the Kremlin mind these are keep from the Mediterranean, and that Moscow recently deployed nuclear-capable bombers to Syria shows it now has an extra platform it can use as both as tactical tit for tat reaction to activity in different theatres, but also on a strategic level a deterrent to NATO's southern flank, it fits ability to execute strategic operations on a regional level.

Russian PMCs and Turkey-backed fighters

PMCs have been one of Moscow's tools in military operations as part of strategic competition and conflict. Indeed, increased use of PMCs overlapped with changes in Russian military doctrine and strategy concerning the use of non-state actors in the conflict.⁸ According to a recent FMSO (Foreign Military Studies Office at Ft. Leavenworth) report, "PMCs can operate across the conflict continuum and present the U.S. Army with dilemmas at all levels of war." The most dangerous scenario the report identifies is in Syria, where thanks to a high level of state support, a Russian

(militarytimes.com) <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2021/05/27/biden-ending-trump-ok-for-us-oil-company-in-syria-says-official/>

- 6 "Norland: Turkey is Ready to Negotiate Withdrawal of Syrian Mercenaries from Libya," Al Marsad, April 25, 2021 <https://almarsad.co/en/2021/04/25/norland-turkey-is-ready-to-negotiate-withdrawal-of-syrian-mercenaries-from-libya/>
- 7 "Russia concerned by US military buildup in Eastern Mediterranean — foreign ministry," TASS, October 1, 2020 <https://tass.com/defense/1207627>
- 8 "Private Military Companies (PMCs)," Congressional Research Service, September 16 2020 <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11650/8>



1 – The imagery details the extent of equipment being supplied to Wagner. Russian military cargo aircraft, including IL-76s, continue to supply Wagner fighters. Russian air defense equipment, including SA-22s, are present in Libya and preoperated by Russia, the Wagner Group or their proxies. Photo by U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs.

PMC in Syria was able to function – more or less – as a battalion tactical group.⁹

PMCs also engage in a wide range of clandestine activities. Moreover, their behaviour follows a pattern that allows the Russian state to cement greater state influence in a country, even as sometimes PMCs encounter significant setbacks.¹⁰ Left unchecked, PMCs have the potential to can bring the Russian government closer to its strategic aims of securing greater access in the

Mediterranean by operating under the radar to avoid provoking a response and then presenting the West a fait accompli.

In the West, the debate about the definition of PMCs is ongoing.¹¹ This ongoing debate complicates the formulation of a clear-cut approach in how to address them. To date, sanctions have been one tool (i.e. US Treasury department has sanctioned Prigozhin in September 2019 in connection with interference in the US election and

9 *Russian Private Military Companies: Their Use and How to Consider Them in Operations, Competition, and Conflict (Asymmetric Warfare Group)*, Foreign Military Studies Office, US Army, April 2020 <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/p/fmso-bookshelf>

10 Anna Borshchevskaya, “The Role of Russian Private Military Contractors in Africa,” Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), August 2020. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/08/the-role-of-russian-private-military-contractors-in-africa/>

11 For a detailed discussion on PMC definition, see the Kimberly Marten, “Russia’s use of semi-state security forces: the case of the Wagner Group,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, March 26, 2019 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1060586X.2019.1591142>

further sanctioned him in April 2021 in connection with his malign Africa activities).¹² However, sanctions targeted Prigozhin's acts, not because he operates a PMC. Exposure to malign PMC activities has been another instrument. Last year U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) increased publicity of Russian PMC activities in Libya. For example, it released imagery of deployment of at least 14 combat aircraft from Russian and Syrian bases to Libya's Al Khadhim and Al Jufra airbases.¹³ Yet it remains unclear whether the US and the West more broadly has a plan to impose sufficient costs and raises risks for Moscow to continue using them.

Turkey does not appear to copy the Russian PMC model, but Ankara also has used foreign fighters. Last year, U.S. Defense Department's inspector general concluded that Ankara sent 3,500-3,800 paid Syrian fighters into Libya. It is noteworthy that most recently the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that it has a bilateral agreement with the internationally-recognized Libyan government (Tripoli-based Government of National Accord - GNA). This agreement covers military training and support. Ankara agrees "mercenaries" should leave Libya. Indeed, Turkish elements are in Libya on an official invitation of the Libyan government, unlike Russian PMCs.¹⁴ While technically true, there is a hint of irony to this as the Russian government claimed the same legality of state presence in Syria. Regardless neither

Turkey nor Russia will bring stability to Libya, there is no substitute for American leadership here.

Conclusion

Although Biden routinely criticizes Putin, he ultimately aims for a "stable and predictable" relationship with him,¹⁵ so he can focus more on China. It looks like the Russian President has a different vision. Indeed, he is not searching for stability. Kremlin interests do not align with those of the West. Most significantly, Biden recent decision to waive sanctions on Nordstream 2 and Putin main geopolitical project in Europe reduces Western leverage over Russia. Indeed, Putin gloated at the annual St. Petersburg Economic Forum in June that Ukraine will have to show "goodwill" if it wants Russian gas transit. Nordstream2 will give Russia more influence in Europe and, therefore, the Mediterranean. In the absence of an effective American leadership in this region, backed by a credible threat of use of military force, when necessary, Moscow could fill the vacuum and in time establish a naval base in Benghazi or an airbase in Tobruk, which will help Moscow expand further not only into the Middle East but also Africa while gaining greater leverage over Europe. Biden may not see Russia as the top priority but Putin sees the US as such, and his ongoing enhancement of Russian military posture in the Mediterranean is ultimately about eroding US global influence.

12 Treasury Targets Assets of Russian Financier who Attempted to Influence 2018 U.S. Elections | U.S. Department of the Treasury <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm787>

Treasury Escalates Sanctions Against the Russian Government's Attempts to Influence U.S. Elections <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0126e>

Russian Government's Attempts to Influence U.S. Elections | U.S. Department of the Treasury

13 "Russia deploys military fighter aircraft to Libya," May 2020

<https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/32887/russia-deploys-military-fighter-aircraft-to-l>

"Russian aircraft active in Libya, AFRICOM says," Reuters, June 18, 2020.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security/russian-aircraft-active-in-libya-afcom-says-idUSKBN23P2RA>

14 "Turkey says mercenaries should leave Libya, but it has military pact with government," Reuters, May 6, 2021

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-says-foreign-mercenaries-should-leave-libya-it-has-agreement-with-libyan-2021-05-06/>

Isabel Debre, "Pentagon report: Turkey sent up to 3,800 fighters to Libya," *Apnews.com*, July 17, 2020 <https://apnews.com/article/c339f71bf029f36b1091ee31c9f0171a>

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Masks, vaccines, and investment promises – The geopolitics of China's COVID-19 Health Diplomacy in the MENA region

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The spread of COVID-19 has been widely under control within the People's Republic of China (PRC) for over a year. On June 12, the PRC reported 34 new COVID-19 infections. About 20 million people get vaccinated in China per day, equating to roughly two-thirds of all global shots administered. The last time someone reportedly died from or with the coronavirus in China was on May 1, 2021¹. Few would have predicted this outcome in January 2020, when hospitals in Wuhan were at the brink of collapse.

Despite originating from China, Beijing has dealt with COVID-19 as a foreign issue for over a year. Measures within the PRC remain strict, and obstacles for entering² remain high. While the PRC received foreign aid from at least 58 states³ in early 2020, it quickly became the world's primary supplier for COVID-19 relief. When the WHO declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020⁴, the spread of the virus was already under control in China.

Since then, Beijing has been engaging in widespread health diplomacy. China aims to promote the image of China as a “*responsible great power*” and consequently Western states (in particular the US) as powers in decline that are unable to provide solutions for complex international affairs.

The pandemic has boosted the ambitions of China to new heights. Beijing's “mask and vaccine diplomacy” rely primarily on (1) streamlined international propaganda, (2) strategic deliveries, and (3) promises of post-pandemic economic recovery.

Propaganda

China's health diplomacy propaganda efforts are coordinated and follow a consistent narrative: The West has failed the developing world. The PRC is ready to take on the responsibility. The PRC provides solutions in the fight against the pandemic. The West (in particular the US and Europe) is unable to offer solutions to complex international challenges.

Beijing quickly understood the importance of perspectives in its health diplomacy. Chinese embassies all over the world have been tweeting daily about China's COVID-19 relief efforts. Even small deliveries provide an opportunity for photo ops with the Health Ministers of the recipient country. President Xi Jinping's wife, the singer and WHO special envoy Peng Liyuan, has led several online ceremonies to mark Chinese assistance. She has also personally donated⁵ protective masks to African countries.

Chinese ambassadors have been writing op-eds⁶ in newspapers of their host country, in which they

1 Relevant data can be found here: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

2 <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/how-can-foreigners-enter-china-under-the-covid-19-travel-restrictions/>

3 https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2021C09_ChinaHealthDiplomacy.pdf

4 <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

5 <http://bw.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/t1798588.htm>

6 https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbd_665378/t1821356.shtml

promote China's aid and bilateral cooperation during the pandemic.

At the same time, Chinese media outlets have pushed⁷ stories to raise doubts about the safety of Western vaccine candidates and Western failures to share medical equipment with other (developing) states.

Strategic deliveries

There are only a few countries that did not receive COVID-19 relief from China in 2020. Aid originated from various actors in China (the Central State, Provinces, Municipalities, the People's Liberation Army, the Chinese Communist Party, state-owned enterprises, the Jack Ma and Alibaba Foundation, and Chinese 'NGOs').

Donations often mirror the strategic interests⁸ of the PRC. For instance, majoritarian Muslim countries (such as Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan) received mask donations from the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. These donations underline Beijing's efforts to establish friendly relations with Muslim countries to avoid criticism of its human rights record (for instance, within the UN Human Rights Council). While Western democracies criticize China for its treatment of Xinjiang's Uighur population, governments of Middle Eastern states voice few concerns (but rather praise) regarding China's treatment of the Uighurs.

In countries where Chinese state-owned enterprises run BRI projects (for instance in Africa), donors included relevant banks, construction companies, and raw material companies. The telecoms company Huawei preferentially gave support to countries in which it was pursuing strategic interests in the 5G expansion: in Europe, these included the Czech

Republic, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Spain.

In May 2020, at the WHO Assembly, President Xi Jinping pledged to provide vaccines as a "global public good"⁹ to the world. Yet, the majority of Chinese vaccine deliveries reflect the strategic interests of the PRC.

For instance, El Salvador (which in 2018 had switched diplomatic relations from Taiwan to the PRC) has received preferential treatment from Beijing in vaccine deliveries. It has the highest vaccination rate in Central America (as of June 11, 36 per cent of the population have received at least one shot). Neighboring Guatemala, which has not (yet) established diplomatic relations with Mainland China, has a vaccination rate of just 4 per cent (as of June 11, 2021).

The PRC's vaccination deliveries to South America have been so successful that they have triggered a political debate within Paraguay,¹⁰ whether to switch diplomatic relations just for vaccine access. Paraguay borders countries have all received vaccines from China and have much higher vaccination rates.

Other countries, which struck deals with China (e.g., Morocco, Hungary, Serbia, Turkey, Cambodia, Mongolia, or Zimbabwe) have emerged as regional vaccine champions, far outperforming their neighbours.

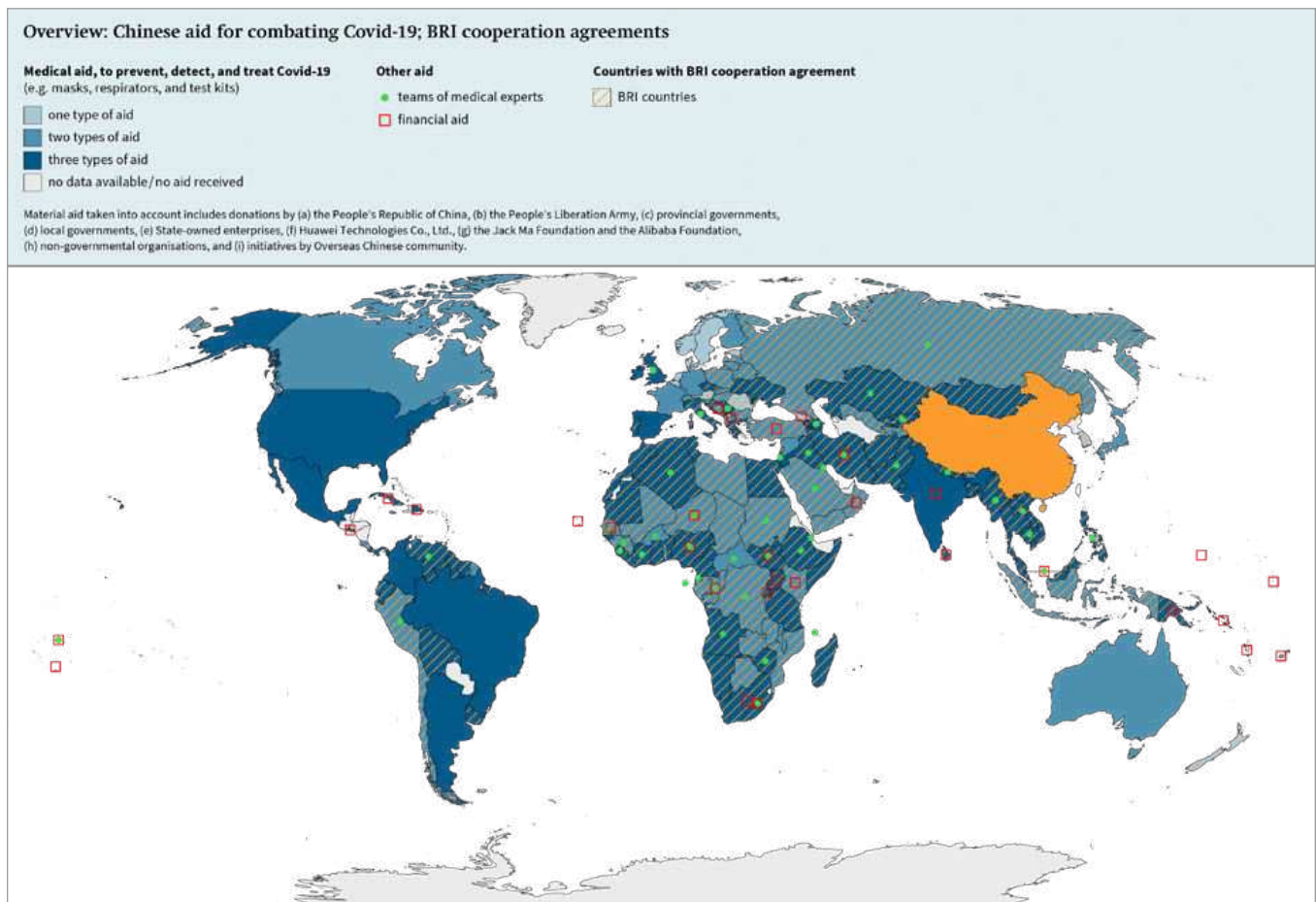
In the MENA region, Chinese vaccine makers have struck deals with Turkey (Sinovac, 100 million doses), Egypt (Sinovac, 40 million doses; Sinopharm, 20 million doses), Morocco (Sinopharm, 41 million doses), and Albania (Sinovac, 1 million doses). In addition, the Egyptian company VACSERA has entered into manufacturing agreements with Sinopharm and Sinovac, turning the country into a regional vaccine production hub.

7 http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-01/20/c_139684599.htm

8 https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2021C09_ChinaHealthDiplomacy.pdf

9 http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/18/c_139067018.htm

10 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56661303>



1 – The underlying data were collected by Moritz Rudolf, Nadine Godehardt, Jonathan Lehrer, and Andrea Frenzel. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2021.

Also, China has become the global leader in vaccine donations.¹¹ Until late May 2021, it had donated around 15.1 million doses, about 56 per cent of all donated doses worldwide. However, this constitutes less than the number of vaccines the PRC administers to its population per day. It underlines the fact that, so far, merely 0.1 per cent of all delivered doses have been donations. There has been a significant lack of international solidarity. It has, therefore (until the recent pledges by Western democracies), been easy for Beijing to push the narrative of China as a “responsible great power”.

Also, Chinese donations are often tied to vaccine deals of higher quantities. For instance, Zimbabwe received 400.000 doses as donations and bought over

2.2 million doses from Sinopharm. Mongolia signed a deal over 2.3 million doses and received 300.000 doses as donations. Given the comparatively high price of Chinese vaccines (between 10-40 USD per dose – in comparison, AstraZeneca’s vaccine is being sold at around 2-4 USD per dose), these donations should be considered hardly charitable.

Most vaccine donations were delivered to states bordering China (e.g. Cambodia, Pakistan, Laos, Philippines, Nepal). In the MENA region, Egypt has been the top recipient of Chinese vaccine donations with 600.000 doses. In international comparison, Egypt ranks sixth overall. Other countries in the region, China has donated vaccines to, include: Syria

11 <https://www.unicef.org/supply/covid-19-vaccine-market-dashboard>

(150.000), Tunisia (100.000), West Bank and Gaza (100.000), Lebanon 50.000 and Montenegro 30.000.

Connecting Health Diplomacy with the promise of post-pandemic recovery

Since as early as June 2020,¹² the Chinese leadership has utilized its network of regional “China+x mechanisms” (e.g., with countries from the ASEAN, Africa (FOCAC), Central and Eastern Europe (17+1), or the Arab League) to host conferences on combatting COVID-19. During these events, China, on the one hand, pledged priority access to Chinese vaccines. On the other hand, Beijing has promised measures for post-pandemic economic recovery.

China’s focus on emerging COVID-related economic challenges for developing states might play out to its advantage, as most Western states still primarily focus on containing the virus within their borders. This aspect of China’s health diplomacy remains the most abstract and least recognized in Europe but potentially the most impactful one from a geopolitical perspective.

For instance, Beijing has promised significant economic support, debt relief, and investments to regions of increasing geopolitical significance for China, in general, and within the Belt and Road Initiative in particular (e.g., Africa, Oceania, Latin America, and Southeast Asia).

Looking at the MENA Region, the PRC has promised post-COVID investments within the 17+1 forum, FOCAC, and China’s cooperation forum with the Arab League. Of particular significance for Beijing, thereby remain the states of the Western Balkan and (most of all) Egypt.

Outlook

It is too early to conclude whether China’s health diplomacy has been beneficial to Beijing from a geopolitical standpoint. However, China is clearly in a

front-runner position as it has been engaging in health diplomacy since February 2020. The lack of leadership and solidarity by traditional aid providers during the first 15 months of the pandemic has enabled China’s health diplomacy to gain traction.

China’s health diplomacy did not succeed in Europe and the US (other issues such as Xinjiang, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or sanctions against European academics and politicians dominate the China discourse). However, it is crucial to underline that Western states are not the prime target for China’s health diplomacy in the first place.

China’s health diplomacy focuses primarily on developing countries. In developing states, China’s health diplomacy has been more successful. The West often narrow focus on the qualitative defects of Chinese aid fails to recognize that Beijing has supported many of those states effectively and extensively.

Despite its relevant role within the BRI, the MENA region was not the main target of China’s donations and propaganda efforts. Nevertheless, China’s efforts in the region were comprehensive. Besides, the MENA region (as of June 14, 2021) is one of the most important markets for Chinese vaccine manufacturers (the top market for Sinopharm, and a significant market for Sinovac). It is in particular Egypt which stands out. For several years, Egypt has developed into a crucial partner for Beijing to promote the BRI (e.g. by offering to serve as a hub within the ‘Digital Silk Road’). Not surprisingly, it is also the hub for China’s health diplomacy efforts in the MENA region.

While COVID-19 has not led to new trends of China’s diplomatic efforts in the MENA region, it has rather served as an accelerator.

It is questionable whether the recent pledges of the G-7 to provide 1 billion vaccine doses to developing countries will cause a significant shift of the international COVID-19 narrative. The US has not been showing evident international solidarity

12 <http://www.focac.org/eng/ttxsyt1790867.htm>

during the first 15 months of the pandemic. In particular, the Trump administration produced several negative headlines (e.g., seizing 20 ventilators bound to Barbados¹³). The US and European states now have an opportunity to engage in widespread strategic and coordinated aid efforts to catch up and to regain trust.

It will be interesting to watch whether Beijing will increase its pledge to vaccine donations as well. The PRC will continue a multi-level approach. Accordingly, Beijing will act bi- and multilaterally at the same point in time. China will continue

to promote COVAX and is likely to expand its commitment since the domestic situation in India hinders Delhi¹⁴ from further engaging. In addition, China will continue to engage bilaterally and within its regional China+x formats.

In Europe, the geopolitical implications of the pandemic would first need to be recognized. Specific coordinated and long-term focused proposals for third countries for the post-pandemic period would be necessary. Given China's larger footprint, this is in particular true for the MENA region.

13 <https://barbadostoday.bb/2020/04/05/ventilators-destined-for-barbados-seized-by-u-s/>

14 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-57135368>



The New Mediterranean Great Game: geo-energy and geo-economic challenges in the basin

Mr. Marco Piredda

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The Mediterranean, a celebrated cradle of civilisation, is both an old and a new geopolitical frontier. It is also true from an energy point of view. The basin hosts traditional and new sources of energy and has potential for innovative ones. The evolution in the making adds on top of existing rivalries for controlling energy production and exportation – but as hydrocarbons mix with electrons, this new landscape may also mean new solutions to related challenges.

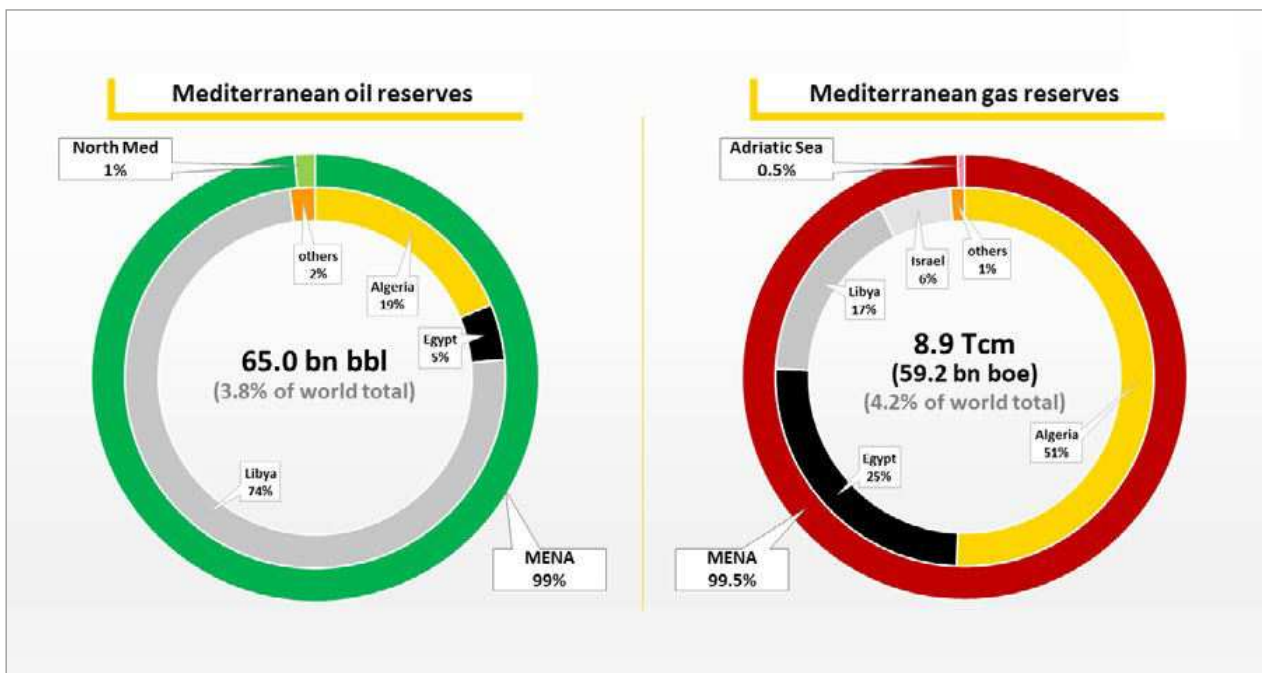
Riding the waves of the energy transition

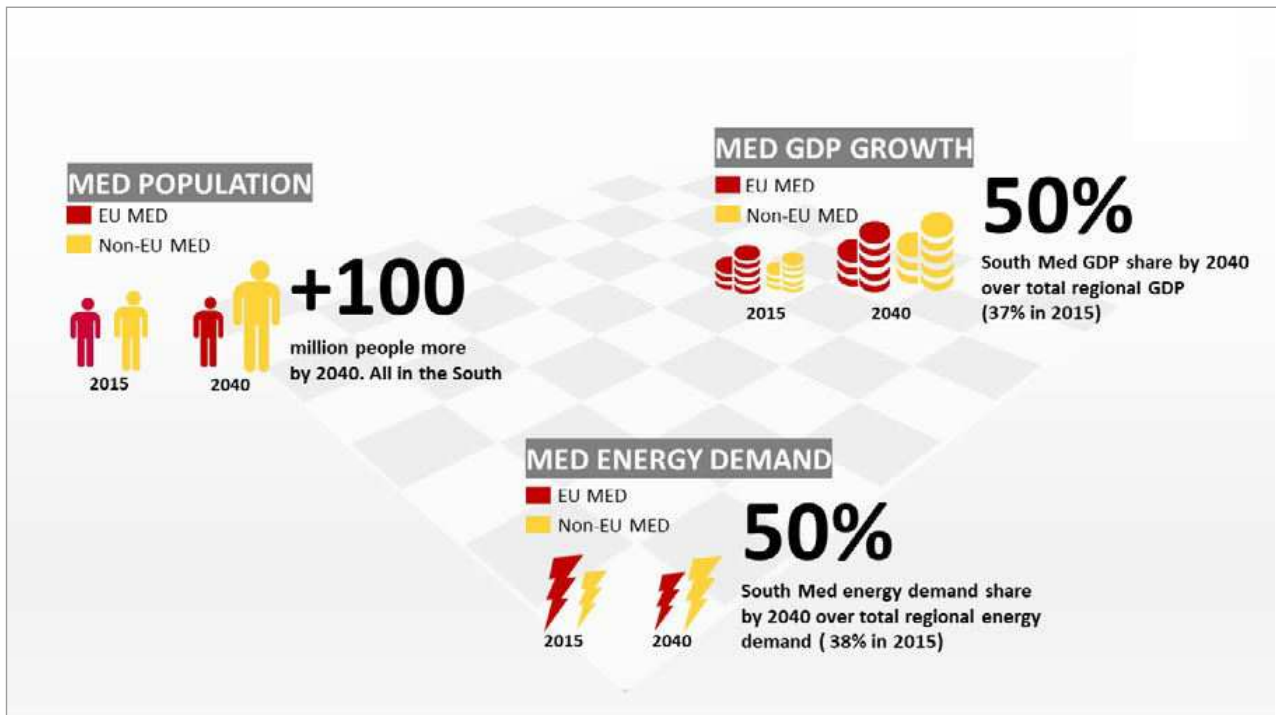
Interest in the Mediterranean peaked in the last decade, after major discoveries in its eastern portion. Giant gas fields have been encountered in waters offshore Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt. Further interesting findings have followed – even in more recent months, i.e. in Egypt.

The large availability of resources next to existing export infrastructures and large European consumer markets represented a plus in attracting investments. It had effects also on previously neglected fields. These advantages were becoming more important, for the decarbonisation imperative suggested having more gas assets for a balanced portfolio.

The COVID-19 pandemic partially disrupted this trend. The drive to traditional sources had to take economics more and more into consideration while also adding more urgency on the green side of energy.

Some exploration is now about to restart. Priority is assigned to projects with shorter monetization times and less exposed to higher risks. The Mediterranean, where existing infrastructure allows for allocating costs among several productions, will remain key, as it is increasingly difficult to sanction new major projects while we still





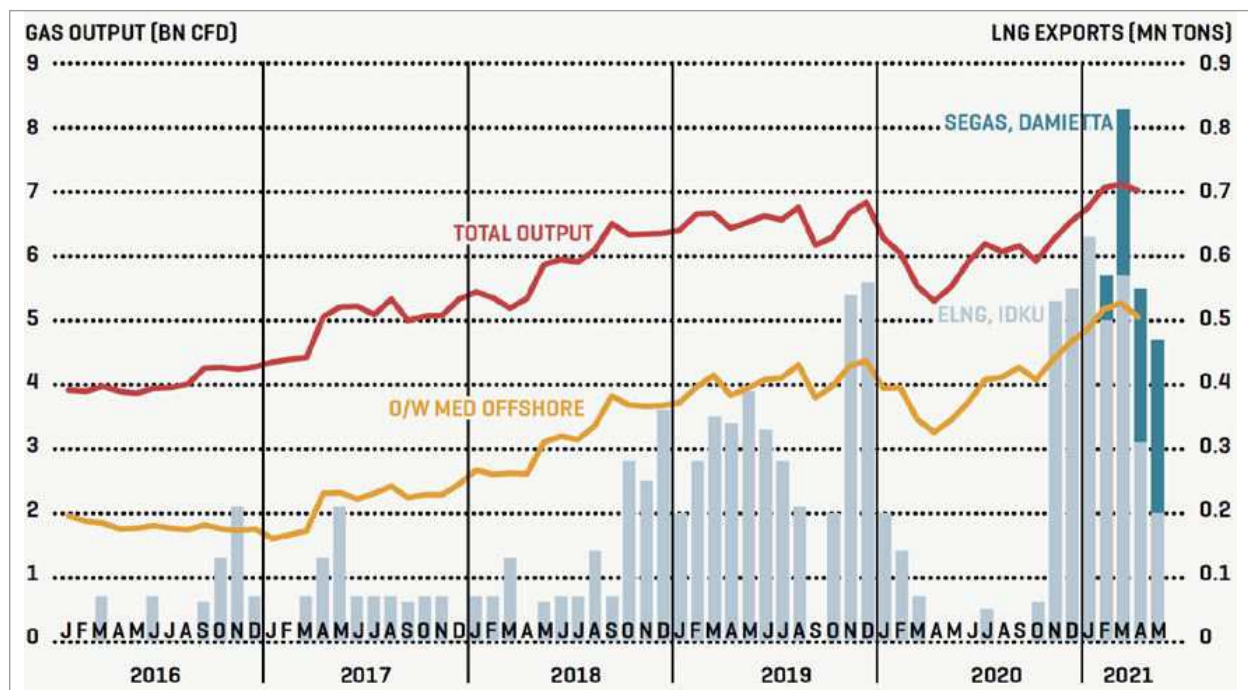
2 – Population, GDP growth and energy demand patterns in the Med (sources: OME, UNWPP, IMF)

experience further pandemic waves. Having shorter pathways from fields to onshore facilities to markets is a further plus in these uncertain times.

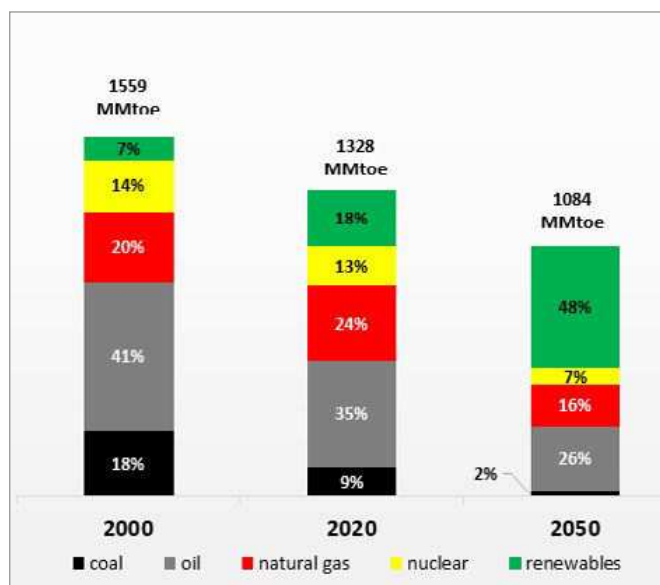
A second fact – and soon an engine for geo-economic change – is the growth of local consumption of

traditional and new energies. Demographics and a lesser energy-intensive Europe are the main drivers behind this shift.

The gas produced in the Mediterranean basin will growingly be designed to meet domestic needs on its



3 – Egypt's gas output and LNG exports (source: MEES)



4 – EU 27 Total primary energy demand mix (source: IHS)

southern shore, in Egypt in particular. Surpluses will then be transported via LNG to Asia where demand is also growing; Europe will remain a premium market but will continue experiencing a diminishing demand, although a harsh winter may still refute this trend – as it happened during 2020. Europe will continue pushing in this direction, for it sees this as an opportunity to reduce external dependency and associated costs.

Up until here, the scenario we are describing is that of a certain future. Ahead of this, it will be mandatory to plan where to allocate production beyond what domestic markets will initially absorb. This is where the new paradigm will show its effects and force Mediterranean players to adapt. Gas and electricity will be the means to implement a more collaborative transition and move forward together.

The sharp acceleration in the energy transition process altered the previous balance. Its fast pace increasingly curbs conventional resources for the benefit of new ones, also in policy and planning terms. In the medium term, the foreseeable energy mix will still be ensured by traditional sources along with renewables. Changes in the regulation and a still partly unclear technological evolution will be the main forces redesigning the sector.

Consequences will go beyond the pandemic. At this moment, regulatory levers diminish predictability on the demand side – about what types of energy will be demanded or will be allowed in the future. This is a new element to take into consideration.

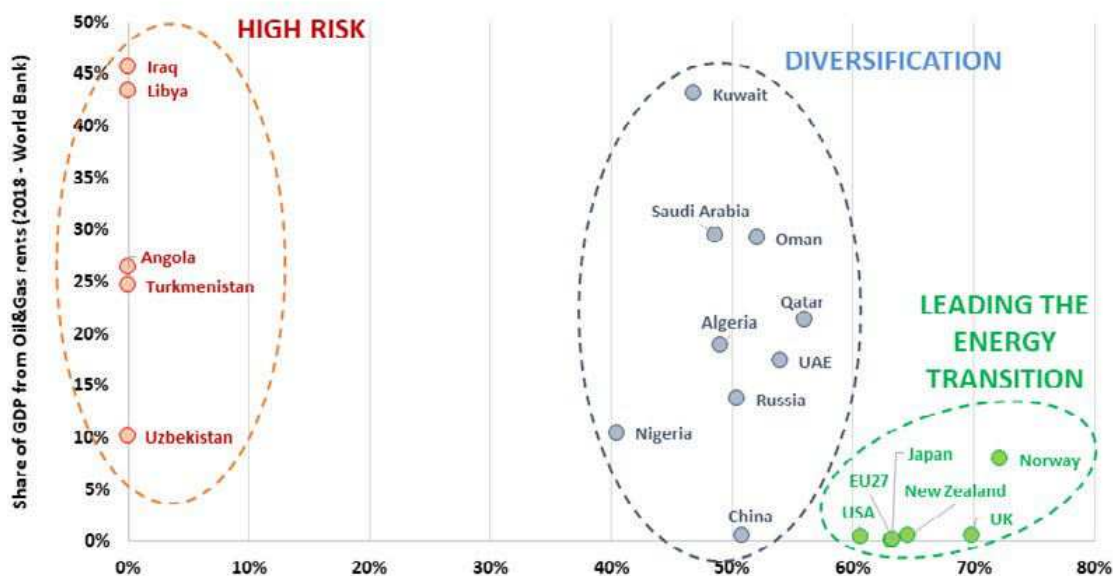
The electrification of a large part of the energy system would also bring more complexity to systems. Many local actors will be energy producers and consumers at the same time. It will be necessary to think more locally as more decentralised systems will arise. Large-scale infrastructure will still be relevant along with smaller assets (i.e. the Tunisia-Italy cable or the planned Euro-Asia interconnector to link Greece to Cyprus and Israel) to help keep the system in balance. Overall, this situation will not be a mere replacement of conventional sources with cleaner ones, but rather the progressive creation of a new system where economic actors combine new resources in an efficient way, also choosing which infrastructural backbones to prioritise.

Geo-economics of Mediterranean energies

In energy terms, the decade that has just begun has been defined as a “*make-or-break*” decade in which to act effectively on the transition to avoid climate change. The next ten years will be crucial in coordinating the efforts across the Basin through partnerships increasingly focused on renewable energies.

The European Union is driving the process, trying to combine leadership in climate policies with the transformation and the relaunching of its industrial capacity and thus the consolidation of its geopolitical role. China is following on the same path, building on Europe’s long-lasting experience.

Each Government tries to be a ‘winner’ of this process, remaining abreast of innovation, advancing adequate regulatory frames, and dodging sustainability requirements to ensure traditional productions are more efficient and go along with the latest environmental and social constraints. Countries that would not – or could not – invest in this direction could face higher costs and loss of competitiveness in the medium term.



5 - Energy transition as a competitive advantage (source: World Economic Forum)

Geo-economics change accordingly. Foreign relations have been eventful and concurred to shape the energy sector in the Basin, especially in its Eastern part. Zero-sum (or even negative-sum) games have characterised exploration in Cyprus' offshore areas claimed by Turkey. Foreign and security policy remains a dominant driver, but market and pro-market dynamics are gaining speed.

The need to mitigate inherent risks and to be attractive to international players seems a powerful drive. Financial markets are increasingly moving towards more sustainable investment, and it is hence even more imperative to meet their demands. While Turkey is still assessing its Black Sea gas discoveries, in 2021, Ankara reached out a friendlier hand to Egypt. Cairo reciprocated by calling for new offshore exploration rounds that take current Turkish claims in the Mediterranean into account. A constructive approach may follow: to uphold its role as an energy hub in the East Mediterranean, Ankara needs to downplay anti-Turkish sentiments in the region anyway.

Moreover, following the Abraham Accords, Israel and the UAE have also signed off a strategic cooperation agreement for developing renewable projects. This bilateral energy diplomacy may have a side effect on Egypt, but Israel paid due attention not to neglect that

partnership too. Indeed, Israeli gas exports are flowing through Egypt and discussions about linking Israeli fields to Egyptian infrastructures are still ongoing. In parallel, the Israeli-Jordan relation is being enriched by an energy agreement where Israeli gas is vital for the Jordan energy mix. Israel helped Amman by ensuring a baseload of safe energy supply, increasing its renewable energy quota. Also, in this way, Israeli productions find a market, avoiding the fate other offshore fields have endured.



6 - Algeria-Tunisia-Libya electricity interconnections; planned 400 kV route is estimated (source: MEES)

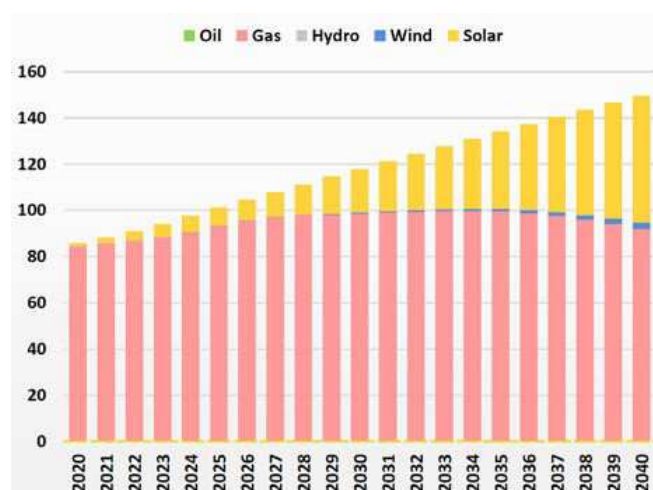
Further, through its national corporation for electricity and gas (Sonelgaz), Algeria is about to supply electricity to Western Libya. This first-of-its-kind project, if implemented, sees electrons being directly ushered into bilateral talks between Northern African countries, along with relevant political interest.

Point to point connections already existed in the past, their motives being mainly restricted to energy balances between Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. For the first time, the energy exchange is directly sought between two major players. As in other infrastructure projects, European support and regulatory policy will be decisive, also in connection with the launch of tools for cooperation with its Mediterranean neighbourhood, such as NDICI (Neighbourhood, Development, International Cooperation Instrument).

Libya is keen to develop a robust renewable and clean power generation of its own; Tripoli is proposing these opportunities to a plethora of potential foreign investors: European partners are on the top of the list from a technology point of view, but US companies remain among the most important for what concerns new investment opportunities. Keeping the political transition on track is directly connected to the growing interest in traditional and renewable energies that Libyan executives try to encourage. Tripoli aims at developing existing production and recover lost time, enhance local consumption, exchange among the Basin's southern shore countries and soon be a new featured supplier to the northern shore of the Mediterranean. The NOC (National Oil Corporation) is the epicentre of this delicate shift that goes beyond renewables.

Not all that glitters is gold. Algeria is embroiled also in talks with Morocco over contract renewal for gas transported through the GME to Spain and Portugal. Bilateral tensions make for a more difficult negotiation, though it will be expedient for all sides to reach an extension. Gas is partially off taken by Morocco to power its power plants in the North, and a positive attitude could prevail. In 2019, the newly upgraded

Algeria-Spain Medgaz pipeline had carried the highest flow of Algerian gas to Europe.

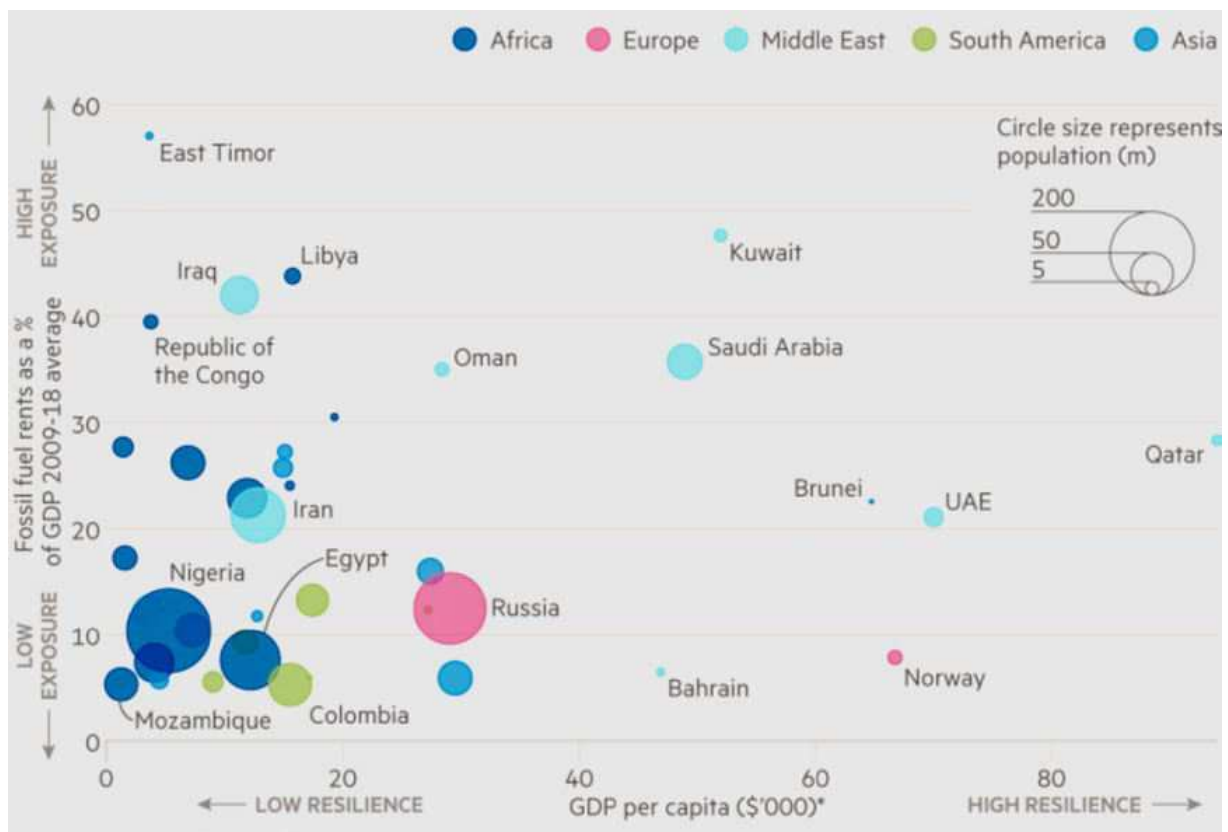


7 – Algeria, electric generation mix (TWh)
(source: Wood Machenzie)

Competition between the two Maghrebi players is also on renewables. The pandemic and a more stringent socio-economic environment affected investment plans of state-owned entities and forced Morocco to slow down on its celebrated – but expensive – solar flagship projects and on green hydrogen pilot plant to be developed with Germany. Algeria bets on a relaunch of its energy sector that goes beyond traditional resources to bring solar and new energies online, while the existing pipeline network to Europe might be used also for transporting low-carbon gas. Italy and Germany are among the key partners in this effort; Turkey is also present and offers to go beyond current upstream talks and purchases of LNG to help Algeria with its expertise in renewables.

As it is evident, especially when innovative sources of energy are taken into consideration, we are talking about regional players. Governments and NOCs are called upon to play a major role also in place of some traditional great players who have a more traditional approach to their portfolios.

The US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate (John Kerry), recently appointed, has entered the scene with the onset of the Biden Administration. This approach might hence change, and it is possible that while European companies will be more focused on a



8 – Producing countries and oil rent as percentage of GDP (sources: FT; World Bank)

customer-centric approach, US majors will position themselves on new businesses without losing the grip on conventional ones, to fulfil the new green imperative developing in Washington, for example on Hydrogen and CCUS (Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage). A more proactive stance across all the Mediterranean may soon follow. For example, CCUS initiatives have strong synergies with upstream and power or industrial sector capacity. A change in the US position could also divert some attention away from traditional energy sources in favour of more innovative ones.

China monitors these developments from afar. The US has stopped a deal in the Sorek 2 Israeli desalinisation plant where Chinese companies were to take part. Although Beijing has become a preferred destination of Gulf oil flows, its energy security would not depend on any significant event occurring in the Mediterranean. It is rather the other way around: despite some shine being taken off the Belt and Road Initiative, many Mediterranean Governments still attach great importance to China, for example letting Chinese investors enter

seaport infrastructures and operatorship (i.e. in Haifa, though in a non-strategic section of the asset; Chinese companies also will build an FSRU in Cyprus, together with Greek counterparts).

The US remain concerned about this trend. Economic issues will continue to affect most of the region and may increase intraregional rivalries on energy projects. In particular, those rivalries associated with more innovative technological solutions. Over time, China has become a world champion in the production and export for example of certain components of solar panels and Beijing remains a key partner in the region. The US would continue to pursue more balanced commercial partnerships, also encouraging technological agreements with other global players such as India, Japan or South Korea.

Russian companies fit in this dynamic and will remain a partner for investments, not only in Syria and Lebanon but also where Russia already has good political and military relations, such as in Egypt, Algeria and Libya. Among their main objectives is to remain global energy players.

More collaborative partnerships can be developed

The control of energy has long been associated with political tensions. Being at the crossroad of many interests, the Mediterranean provided many examples in this direction. The Med basin has also been a paradigm of the competition for resources and the resulting age-old adage of ‘all wars having an inner motive in an energy-related motive’.

However, the sector is rarely the root cause of rivalries. Often, these causes lie in an economic or ideological sphere, and energy merely becomes the ground where these reduce tensions. Yet, volatility and fragmentation increase costs and risks of unfavourable scenarios developing.

Problems may be solved by mechanisms to encourage international and intergovernmental organisations, pool infrastructures and lay a common regulatory framework. The pandemic already took a toll on the sector and its supply chain. It clearly showed the limits of an ungoverned process.

Interdependence even among rivals is a distinctive feature of many energy projects. Therefore, energy is a tool to mediate differing interests. With the transition, this dynamic could become more evident and evolve towards higher infrastructural and financial interconnections. Should these partnerships be pursued, they could help diminish challenges that have slowed or prevented the Mediterranean from tapping into its vast potential.

This is not to downplay future challenges. New players are arising, namely, those who are in control

of technologies, materials and future chokepoints – increasingly taking the shape of a powerline or of an optic-fibre cable rather than that of a sea canal or a gas pipeline. Given the importance of the oil revenue for existing economies, it is also crucial that Mediterranean countries adjust their budget reallocation schemes and harmonise them to new social models and new market realities.

The narrative of the transition tends to overlook these factors; still, they risk creating instability. Countries may become more independent than under the previous economic model, yet these constraints carry the risk of new forms of dependence.

Taking these variables into account is important so as not to be trapped in ‘old’ dynamics while realities shift on the ground. Some of the bilateral or regional agreements hitherto described already carry a positive messages: that resources can be pooled; that infrastructures can be connected; that investments can be attracted; that energy self-sufficiency is at hand for many local communities; that transition is an achievable must; that main European and Asian markets can easily be reached; that local markets can be governed.

Huge resources, careful policy planning and more cooperation are needed to fulfil all these promises and deliver on the challenges of a just transition, a process that will not happen overnight. Given that the environment and the climate change are becoming by far a priority in the policy agenda, putting them on the higher level will also ease and lessen energy policy and economic conflicts downhill.



Information in retreat, from peaceful and war zones

Annamaria Esposito

Foreign reporter and Head of service at Rainews24 – Rai Television

As a journalist, Turkish police arrested me in Diyarbakir, Turkey's south-eastern region mainly populated by Kurds. It happened in 2012. At that time, more than 700 Kurdish inmates began a hunger strike in the local prison, sadly known as the "Hell of Diyarbakir", one of the ten worst prisons in the world.

They were protesting against the condition of the prisons, tortures, the detention of the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, and for the rights of Kurds, continually violated and disregarded (e.g. the Kurdish language, which was forbidden by the Turkish government). Several hundreds of Kurds flew the streets of the old city to demonstrate support to the inmates, facing heavy armed Turkish soldiers, tanks, water cannons, tear gas, and rubber bullets.

The Turkish police arrested me at the exact moment while I was going to the demonstrate in a taxi, with other French colleagues, although we were far from the prison and the clashes. Turkish officers halted the car and asked us to go out, first quietly, then the policemen suddenly dragged us brutally to the barrack, then, they separated woman from the man in two different groups.

There, they impeded us to call anyone, despite the fact we were foreigners and journalists. One of the policemen threw my press card on my face, while the other ones dismounted our devices and cameras, checking what we had shouted. I was able to call a friend, hiding my black earphones behind my hair, pretending to speak with a colleague who seated beside me. Thankfully, my friend alarmed the Italian Consulate in Istanbul, and after 7 hours, they let us go.

Our Kurd interpreter was the first separated from our group and beat in front of our eyes. Finally, we were lucky. If the Middle Eastern countries are amongst the

highest jailers of journalists in 2020, Turkey is the second country after China for arresting and censoring the press. But I consider the Kurdish issue the most censored one.

According to the annual global survey of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), after China with 117 reporters in jail, in 2020 Turkey has jailed 37 journalists, less than half of the number of journalists arrested in 2016, after the failed coup attempt, with a surge in arrests.

Three journalists arrested in 2020 are pro-Kurdish, from Mesopotamia News Agency, which reported a story of torture by Turkish military personnel against two Kurdish farmers thrown down from a helicopter.

Most of the 387 reporters jailed in 2020 have been arrested in Turkey, Egypt (30), Saudi Arabia (34), and Syria (27). Moreover, also the number of women journalists arrested increased by 35% in 2020.

Iran is the sixth-highest country where journalists are persecuted, with one of the worst censorships, ranked 174th for RSF index with 15 arrests in 2020. But since



1- Ruhollah Zam in the Supreme Court in Teheran, convicted to death for incitement to protest before the demonstrations in Iran in 2017. He was executed in 12 December 2020 by hanging. He was 42.



2 – Ruhollah Zam was the founder of the channel Amad News. He was arrested and convicted to death in 2019 after he came back from Paris, where he was welcomed as a refugee.

the beginning of the Islamic revolution, the Iranian regime has executed 50 journalists.

On December 12, 2020, the Iranian authorities executed¹ one of them, Roohollah Zam,² on 17 charges, including espionage, spreading false news abroad, and insulting Islamic values and, last but not least, the supreme leader.

Because of the Zam website and Telegram channel, *Amad News* had criticised the Iranian officials and posted the timings and locations of protests in 2017. He was



3 – Hamid is a wellnoun and talented journalist and filmmaker. He is in jail because of posting a cartoon on his Telegram Channel ILNA (Iranian Labor News Agency) about the country's leaders handling of Covid-19 in Iran.

detained in 2019 in Baghdad, Iraq, and then taken to Iran, where the Teheran regime sentenced him to death.

Alleged fake news against the government is one of the main motivations to be arrested in the Islamic Republic. Also, in Iran, satire is forbidden and risky as well. And is not isolated between the countries where the dictatorship is in power. A perfect example is the story of Hamid Haghjoo.

The man in the photo is a cinematographer, an animation director, a designer, a creative, also awarded in Italy in the World Animation Film Festival in Milan. His talent and career are well known in the American and British virtual games industry. Born in Bushehr, on April 27, 1989, which is sadly mostly known for the nuclear plant and the troubled inspections of the IAEA, (International Atomic and Energy Agency of the United Nations). Also, Bushehr is an old, historic city on the sea. It's the most important Iranian harbour on the Persian Gulf. It is a crossroads of influences. I like to imagine how the talented mind of Hamid grew up and bloomed despite the darkness of the regime. On the eve of his 31st birthday, Hamid was arrested, after publishing a cartoon in which he represented Iranian clerics while recommending traditional remedies to treat the virus.

Bitter humour, but fun enough to put him in a dangerous situation and finally being jailed. He did not write an article or shoot a story, but his cartoon worked well enough to disturb the authorities in Teheran.

One of the most censored issues is the pandemic, and Iran is the worst-hit country by the Covid 19 in the Middle East, with over 50,000 deaths. **Indeed, the number of journalists arrested during the pandemic is quadrupled, only from Mars to May 2020** while bringing out the truth. The repression was always motivated by the censorship over the information regarding the coronavirus.

1 <https://cpj.org/2020/12/cpj-condemns-irans-execution-of-journalist-roohollah-zam/>

2 <https://cpj.org/data/people/roohollah-zam/>

Also, in this pandemic time, the MENA region remains one of the worst places for Media freedom. Governments of authoritarian countries have increased their control over the press, especially in Covid-19 times. Nine of them are in the bottom tenth in the rankings of the annual index reviews for the press freedom situation in 180 countries and territories (by Reporters sans frontiers).

In Egypt, three journalists were arrested for reporting over the pandemic, for criticising the lack of state media coverage about health workers who contracted the virus. During the Al Sisi presidency in Egypt, the number of journalists arrested in 2020 (34) increased, if compared to 2019 (31). There are tens of thousands of political prisoners, with journalists and bloggers. According to the CPJ (**Committee to Protect Journalists**)³.

The Egyptian authorities are not an exception. They charge people with the accusation of spreading fake news to put them in jail. That was the case with Mohamed Monir. (image), appeared on the Al Jazeera news channel. Egypt accuses the Al Jazeera media network of being an echo chamber for the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. Monir went to the Tora Prison for political inmates. There, he took the Covid-19 and died in July after being released.

Egypt, ranked 166th, expelled⁴ a journalist from the British newspaper The Guardian for quoting a study that suggested that the number of Covid-19 cases in the country was higher than the government declared. Cairo just banned the publication of any Covid-19 statistics not provided by the Egyptian health ministry. For this reason, the government closed thirty websites.

RSF denounced in his annual report a surge in the censorship toward independent media and blogs. In nearly three-quarters of the countries evaluated, it is



5 - The Saudi blogger Raif Badawi sentenced to 10 years in prison, in isolation, and to 1000 lashes. He was brought to the city center of Geddah and lashed. Raif Badawi is the founder of Free Saudi Liberals Blog. He has a wife and three sons. He won the Sacharov Prize, he is still in jail because of he treated on his blog political and religious issues.

even harder than ever for people to access exact information and much more with the global health emergency.

After Iran, just four positions higher, at 170, is Saudi Arabia, which had tripled the number of journalists detained. In 2017, the number of detainees increased with the arrival to power of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS). In 2012, the blogger Raif Badawi, owner and founder of the website Free Saudi Liberals, was arrested on charges of insulting Islam. He was sentenced to ten years of prison and punished with one thousand lashes. Badawi has gone on several hunger strikes in protest against the conditions he lives in prison.

The most brutal execution remains the killing of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, which is an indelible crime over the Saudi kingdom and the Crown Prince. Mena Rights Group denounced the missing of other journalists since their arrestations. Marwan Al Muraisy,⁵ a Yemeni journalist, is in jail since June 2018. Turki Al Jasser,⁶ arrested from his home in Riyadh on March 15, 2018, and probably

3 <https://cpj.org/reports/2020/12/record-number-journalists-jailed-imprisoned/@pressfreedom#pressfreedom>

4 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/coronavirus-egypt-forces-guardian-journalist-leave-country>

5 <https://menarights.org/en/caseprofile/yemeni-journalist-marwan-al-muraisy-missing-june-2018-arrest-saudi-arabia>

6 <https://menarights.org/en/caseprofile/saudi-journalist-remains-disappeared-rumours-emerge-he-was-tortured-death-detention>

died in prison after being tortured. In February 2019, the Jordanian journalist Abdelrahman Farhaneh⁷ was arrested while he was travelling to Dammam airport by the Saudi State Security Service.

Among different forms of torture, journalists detained are prevented from providing information to their families or lawyers. It is two-fold punishment that impacts the family as well. In Syria, at least ten journalists died in 2018. Five of them killed in Bashar al-Assad's jails.

Journalists that works in these regions are posed under threat by different sides. For this reason, some journalists started to make information neutrals, a sort of self-censorship to protect themselves and their work. Sadly, it is a behaviour diffused not only among journalists who work in non-democratic countries. Indeed, we are witnessing the same thing also among journalists in Western democracies.

Increasingly, reporters are kidnapped. Indeed, ransoms are one of the most lucrative sources of money in many parts of the world. At this moment, at least 54 journalists are being held hostage by non-state actors (RSF). They are all located in the Middle East region (34 in Syria, 11 in Iraq and 9 in Yemen). Often, for non-state actors, we mean Islamic terrorist groups such ISIS or al-Qaeda or, generally speaking, criminal organisations. They use ransoms to finance their operations in the area or abroad.

Islamic State uses to kidnap journalists more than other terrorist groups. In 2020, it kidnapped 25 journalists. There are a lot of armed militant groups that act in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. Last year, four journalists were reported missing, including Tawfik al-Tamimi, the editor of the Iraqi newspaper Al-Sabah. Tawfik disappeared on March 9, 2020, in Baghdad, few days after posting his concerns on Facebook about Mazen Latif, another writer kidnapped. al-Tamini also criticised the economic mismanagement of the Iraqi government.

Since then, the al-Tamimi family did not receive any information about him.

Ten years after the Arab Springs, media freedom in the MENA region is worse than ever. Also, this situation resulted from the new set of rules concerning cybercrime, fake news and hate speech. These new legislations badly restricted press and media freedom across the region. Indeed, in 2015, the UN Human Rights Council voiced concerns about the excessive restrictions on freedom of expression in Kuwait (one of the least repressive countries in the Gulf region).

In North Africa, one of the most impenetrable and untransparent countries is Algeria. Khaled Drareni, a Casbah Tribune reporter, was arrested on 27th March 2020, during the riots and demonstrations that overhauled the Algiers government. The court in Algiers sentenced Khaled to two years for inciting an unarmed gathering and putting national unity at risk. Finally he was released on 19th February 2021.

About 15 reporters were also arrested while covering the protest in Algiers. Djafer Kheloufi, a reporter for the Twala news website, was assaulted by riot police while trying to intervene when five policemen used force to arrest Kenza Khattou, a young woman and colleague who hosts the politics programmes on Radio M.

Rabah Karèche, a Liberté correspondent in Tamanrasset, 900 km south of Algiers, was jailed on April 19, 2020, after covering protests by the Tuareg population of the Ahaggar region who protested against new territorial divisions. He is facing up to ten years in prison on charges (RSF ranked Algeria 146th out of 180 countries).

In Tunisia, where the Arab springs started in 2011, working conditions for journalists worsened. Hate speech is directed against the Independent High Authority for Broadcast Communication (HAICA) by far-right parliamentarians, while violence against journalists and media increased. The security situation in

7 <https://menarights.org/en/caseprofile/jordanian-journalist-abdelrahman-farhaneh-disappeared-february-2019-arrest-saudi-arabia>

Libya is still too risky for journalists. Indeed, foreign reporters are no longer able to visit the country to cover the conflict. The absence of information and reports is dangerous when waiting for the presidential elections in December 2021 for a political transition.

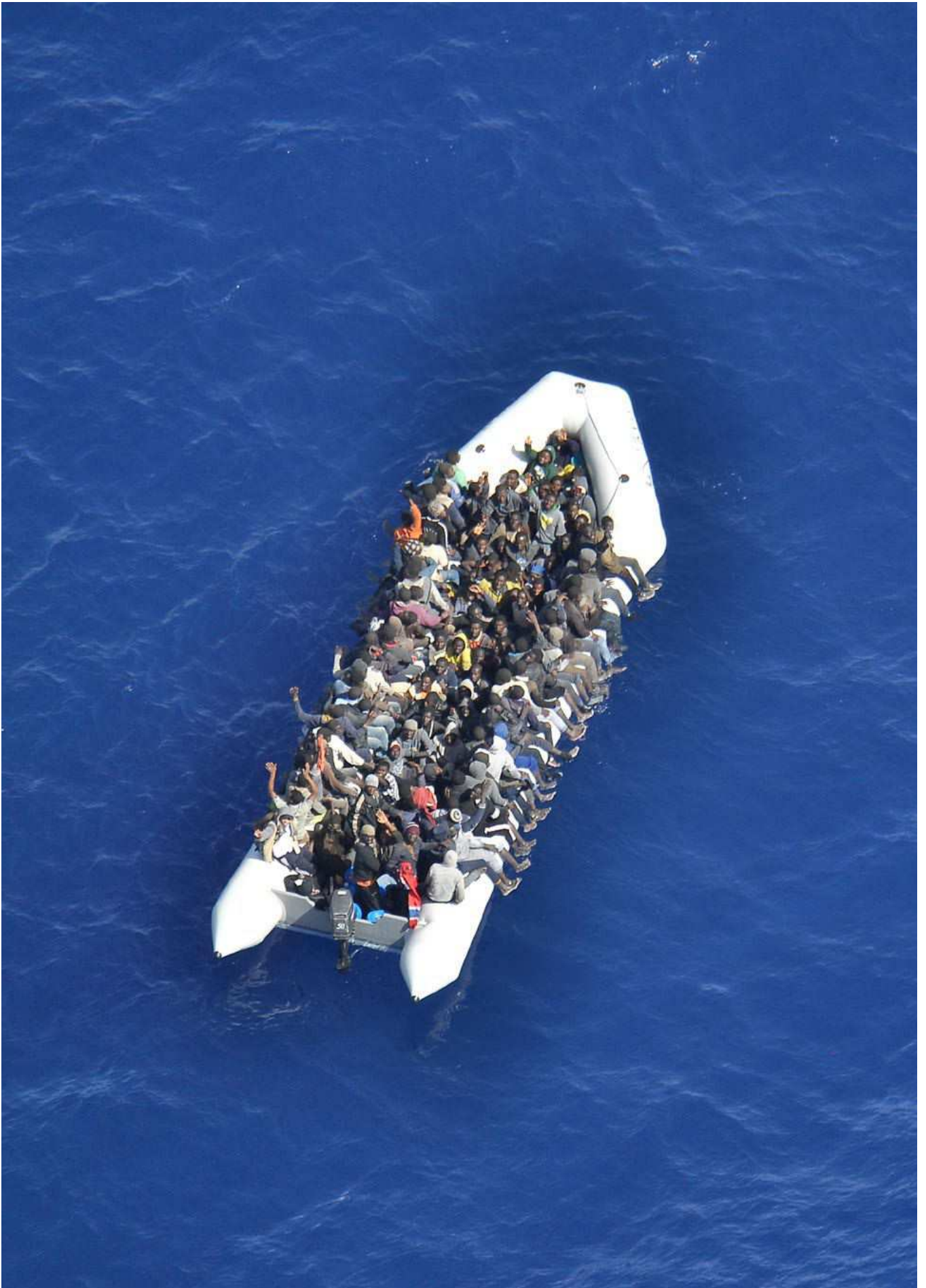
RSF ranked Sudan as the lowest of MENA countries at 175th out of 180 countries worldwide. In Sudan, an increasing number of journalists were arrested, banned from working, and subjected to other forms of judicial harassment by the National Intelligence and Security Service. It is because those reporters decided to cover anti-government protests of December 2018, before Bashar regime crackdown.

In the last ten years, 937 journalists have been killed. During last year, 50 reporters died (45

professionals; 4 producers; 1 freelance). Surprisingly, most of the journalists killed worked in non-conflict zones (Sixty-eight per cent of them died in peaceful areas).

Finally, there is also a creeping threat for journalism. Increasingly, media companies and networks prevent sending reporters to cover the events. In my opinion, this is the main threat, especially if combined with the increasing tendency by social media to delegitimize the so-called old journalism. Often, media companies decide to fill the newsfeed in a more convenient and cheaper formula for the Publishers to manage the Media information.

The latter threat looks like a death sentence for independent and high-level journalism.



Current drivers of mixed movements along the land routes leading to the Western and Central Mediterranean routes

Vincent Cochetel

Special Envoy for the Central & Western Mediterranean Situation

Today, much of the attention of European media and policymakers focuses on the rates of irregular sea movements and interceptions by the coast guards of various Mediterranean coastal States as the main indicators of success in the management of mixed movements of refugees and migrants towards Europe. However, by contrast, there are less research, analysis, preparedness efforts and programmatic responses to help prevent the dangerous journeys of people from Sub-Saharan regions to North African countries and beyond.

I am indeed convinced that a more effective migration and asylum management depends on the quality and the depth of engagement, as well as on the sustainability of the efforts that are spent in the areas closer to the countries of origin of migrants.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) have been recently working together to try to forecast future irregular mixed movements towards North African countries that may in turn influence trends in irregular sea movements across the Mediterranean and the Western African Atlantic waters towards Europe.

Forecasting movements of migrants or asylum seekers is not a perfect science and depends on accurate analysis of rapidly changing variables, including volatile push and pull factors that can quickly influence trends and risks along the routes. An effective understanding and forecasting of trends in irregular mixed movements require a route-based analysis and attention to the nationality of who is involved.

Given the ongoing events provoking mass displacement in the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa, mixed

movements towards North Africa by land include a larger proportion of refugees than irregular sea journeys across the Mediterranean Sea and the North-West-African Atlantic. Besides, the greater part of those mixed movements take place within Sub-Saharan regions and do not affect North Africa and Europe only: it is estimated that 80% of movements in West and Central Africa take place within the same region, while irregular sea crossings from East Africa towards Yemen are constant, even as war rages in that country.

Movements towards North Africa happen both legally and irregularly depending on the routes and the nationalities of the persons on the move. Data from MMC 4MI monitoring in West, Central, East and North Africa, suggest that mixed movements remain the result of diverse motivations. In fact, 52% of those interviewed gave a combination of economic reasons coupled with fleeing violence, insecurity and lack of rights for leaving their country.¹ Livelihood concerns are also at the core of most decision-making: we see them as a predominant driver of migrant movements or of refugees' secondary movements. In short, even refugees fleeing insecurity, conflict and persecution may have other kinds of motivations, including economic ones, especially when they decide to move onwards from their country of asylum to engage in secondary movements. Economic migrants as well, who may have left their home country primarily because of economic reasons, can become victims of human trafficking along the way, or may end up in countries in crisis such as Libya, Mali, Ethiopia, then being forced to flee again to find safety.

For what concerns the 15 countries mainly linked to the movements towards North Africa but also in North

1 4Mi - Mixed Migration Centre: <https://mixedmigration.org/4mi>

African countries themselves, the pandemic had a contradictory impact on the mobility of people. On the one hand, its socioeconomic impact has increased aspirations and propensity to move due to a lack of prospects. On the other, it has limited the people's ability to move by reducing the resources that they can invest in such movement. "Soft" and "hard" border closures or/and strengthened border controls (airports and land border crossings) as well as other restrictions within some countries have also rendered mobility more difficult.

Surveys clearly show that the demand for smugglers' services is increasing. And this makes sense if regular mobility does become more difficult, thus immediately leading to a visible increase in smuggling fees. Evidence also shows that smugglers and traffickers have demonstrated once more their capacity to innovate and diversify their offers by proposing more dangerous routes. Increased dependency on more expensive smugglers and along more dangerous routes comes with more vulnerability and risks for the refugees and migrants involved.

Existing tools do not enable us to quantify precisely the irregular mixed movements towards North Africa. Data registered by the UNHCR only cover part of such mixed movements (i.e. persons wanting to seek asylum in the countries where they registered). In addition, the temporary suspension of registration activities during the pandemic does not enable an easy analysis. In 2020, Tunisia was the only location in North Africa where we saw a 68% increase in the number of asylum seekers compared to 2019. This figure relates mainly to third country nationals that went legally to Tunisia prior to ending up in an irregular situation having overstayed their 90 days permission to stay.

However, the deterioration of the security situation in 4 of the 5 countries neighboring North African

countries is and will continue to lead to external displacement towards North African countries. This situation is further exacerbated by an average cut of 60% in food aid, heavily affecting refugees in these countries.

People embarking on these dangerous journeys will not necessarily approach UNHCR Offices for a variety of reasons: the need to focus on livelihoods to make money to cross the sea or to send remittances back home; the perception that registration gets you "stuck" in North Africa without rights where growing asylum interview backlogs are seen as push factors.

Further afield, insecurity and economic hardship in other countries such as Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Cameroon, CAR, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan will continue to generate mixed primary and secondary movements. While only few of the IDPs in Burkina Faso and South Sudan have left their country to seek international protection, this may change in the future if the security situation does not stabilize.

Moreover, the lack of research, outreach, identification and legal frameworks enabling the permanence in other countries² (ECOWAS protocol or the various options available to South Sudanese nationals in Egypt or in Sudan) makes these persons invisible for the UNHCR even if they may be in a refugee-like situation. When asked, a Burkinabe citizen in Ivory Coast or Ghana may only say that he/she is there to work without disclosing his/her previous forced displacement from his/her place of former habitual residence.

Further research is thus needed on south-south mixed movements to quantify them and assess the protection needs of those involved.

The percentage of migrants embarking on dangerous sea journeys across the Mediterranean Sea and the North-Western African Atlantic who receive protection in Europe is around 35%³. This percentage varies

2 For instance, the ECOWAS protocol on freedom of movement for citizens from ECOWAS countries or the various options available to Sudanese nationals in Egypt or in Sudan or South Sudanese nationals in Sudan.

3 <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Western%20and%20Central%20Mediterranean%20Appeal%202021.pdf>

according to the routes and the nationalities. However, our analysis is distorted by several factors:

- *Inability for the time being of the Spanish authorities to provide clear disaggregated data regarding sea arrivals;*
- *The largest groups on the Central Mediterranean route are predominantly economic migrants: Bangladeshi and Tunisians are the 1st and 2nd biggest group respectively. The largest groups on the Western Mediterranean route are Algerians and Moroccans, while on the NW African maritime route, Malians and Moroccans;*
- *Unwillingness so far from the Moroccan and Algerian authorities to provide access to non-nationals rescued/intercepted at sea;*
- *Unwillingness so far of the Libyan authorities to authorize UNHCR to work with and register more than 9 nationalities.*

Irregular sea movements to Europe (14.000 CM and WM/NW 5.000 in 2021) are currently rather small phenomena in comparison to:

- earlier times along these Mediterranean routes;⁴

- land movements and forced displacement within Sub-Saharan Africa;⁵
- sea movements in the Gulf of Aden.⁶

This is perhaps not always the idea we get if we follow reporting by the media and some of the ongoing policy discussions, but in reality the numbers in question should be very manageable for Europe, especially if we look at them against the background of other trends in human mobility in Europe.

In the short and mid terms, there is no data, in our view, to suggest that the demographic pressure on the African continent will increase cross-border mixed movements and dangerous sea journeys towards Europe. There are many factors at play, but it is interesting to note that the significant increase of population in Africa over the past decade has not led to an increase in the migration rate from the continent and will not lead to a mass exodus in the future.⁷

Along the same lines, existing data suggest that most of the displacement and migration due to the impact of

4 Mediterranean arrivals, by land and sea, to Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Malta (please see, Situation Mediterranean Situation (unhcr.org))

Years	Arrivals
2021 (until 31 May)	28,062
2020	95,031
2019	123,663
2018	141,472
2017	185,193
2016	373,652
2015	1,032,408
2014	225,455

5 To mention a few examples, to date, over 46,000 refugees have fled into Sudan since the violence began in early November 2020 in the Tigray region, in Ethiopia (please see, [Document – UNHCR Ethiopia Situation \(Tigray Region\) Regional Update #17 – 17 May – 14 June 2021](#)); and about 1.7 people were forcibly displaced within the region (please see, [Document – UNHCR Ethiopia Tigray Situation Update 03 June 2021](#)); In addition, the escalated violence and instability in the Sahel led to further displacement within the region. As of 31 May 2021, the region hosts 898,059 refugees and 2,292,851 IDPs (please see, [Situation Sahel Crisis \(unhcr.org\)](#)); The security situation in and around Nigeria, notably across the Lake Chad Basin, has remained volatile in 2021, leading to further displacement in the region and bringing the total of IDPs, as of 31 May, to 3,029,501 persons (please see, [Situation Nigeria Situation \(unhcr.org\)](#)).

6 Between 1st January to 31st May 2021, IOM estimates over 6,000 arrivals in Yemen (please see, [DTM Yemen – Flow Monitoring Dataset – May 2021 | Flow monitoring \(iom.int\)](#))

7 Patterns and Current Trends in African Migration to Europe | SpringerLink



climate change and environmental shocks is short-distance (rural to rural or, increasingly, rural to urban). It involves cross-border movements only in a few places, within the sub-region.

Indeed, people losing their livelihoods because of the impact of climate change cannot afford expensive cross regional journeys. Besides, the socioeconomic consequences of climate change are exacerbating already existing local conflicts linked to access to resources in some Sahelian and in East African (grazing land, water, wood, etc.). This leads primarily to internal displacement but, for a small percentage, it forces external displacement to a neighboring country as well.

Transnational trafficking networks regrettably continue to enjoy quasi-total impunity along the routes. Working on alternatives to dangerous journeys is an imperative for all actors working with migrants/potential migrants in their country of origin as well as those

assisting refugees in countries of first asylum (which can still be not secure).

Working on credible alternatives requires sustainable efforts, which are today insufficient along key routes used for mixed movements. Just informing people about the dangers of certain routes cannot alone make a significant difference in their decisions to move/not move irregularly. Such communication programs need to be supported by better access to education, livelihood activities, food and non-food (cash) assistance. In parallel, the youth is often deprioritized in humanitarian and development responses on the assumption that the youngsters can address their needs by themselves. The reality in many asylum countries remains that the majority of refugees does not have access to basic rights, including the one to be legally employed. Only multi-year route-based efforts in these areas may help mitigate and reduce the numbers of people taking these dangerous journeys⁸.

8 <https://mixedmigration.org/roadmap-protection-2021/>

The EU Green Deal could trigger peace and clean development in the Mediterranean

Arvea Marieni

*Brainscapital Srl Società Benefit partner and board member
and Director of the Energy Transition Programme of Strasbourg Policy Centre*

An ambitious plan to produce clean energy from the MENA (Middle East & North Africa) region could provide a roadmap for peace in Libya. The main obstacles remain politics and geopolitical constraints. Yet, in a world threatened by the collapse of natural ecosystems and unrestrained climate change, such perspectives are relevant for anyone in a position of influence. Italy is well placed to profit from stability in Libya and sustainable development in the region, but remains an observer. Whilst others take the green energy field.

National governments worldwide, regional institutions and private sector businesses are accelerating action to tackle the existential threat of climate change and ensure the protection of the ecosphere. A new financial and legal system for the post-fossil economy is emerging to regulate international trade and markets, while ensuring the creation of sustainable jobs and industries. The political will to act rests on solid economic foundations. Since 2010, the price of solar energy has dropped 82% for photovoltaic solar and 49% for Concentrated Solar Power (CSP). Wind and solar power are today the least-expensive options for bulk electricity for two-thirds of the global population, 71% of global GDP, and 85% of global power generation.

Brussels, London, Washington and Beijing are mainstreaming climate neutrality in policies and international agreements. Such progress may serve as a blueprint for WTO reform, accelerate the energy transition and help to shift more rapidly towards a circular eco-economy. The Italian G20 set up a working group on green finance. Europe has elaborated a major green recovery plan, of which

the core element is the European Green Deal. To achieve its climate neutrality goal by 2050, Europe will need direct electrification, sector coupling, and green hydrogen.

But the energy transition is linked to energy geopolitics. Europe's periphery has several politically unstable energy providers whose social, economic, and political stability depends on being part of Europe's energy structure.

Forward-looking policies will have to provide viable economic alternatives to the region's oil-dependent countries to avoid new wars, poverty, and mass migration.

Fast-tracked decarbonisation means that our mental map of Mediterranean geopolitics will be reframed and reconceptualised.

Libya is Africa's largest oil field and a crossroads for the interests of European energy companies. Until now, oil, as well as gas, is the bloodline of the Libyan economy. But Libya can be a "solar mine" for Italy and Europe.

The country covers an area of 1,750,000 Km², most of which is desert, where the average irradiation is around 5.7 (KWh/m²) and the sun shines for about 3000/3500 hours per year¹. Through large-scale construction of photovoltaic and concentrated solar power plants, Libya could become an exporter of clean electricity, powering the European grid.

The large investment in the infrastructures needed to replace fossil exports would boost the Libyan economy and improve the lives of Libyans, creating development opportunities that do not depend on the control of oil and gas fields.

¹ Ashraf Khalil, Zakariya Rajab, and Ali Asheibi, "Modeling, simulation, analysis and control of stand-alone PV system", 2016/02/11

The aim of this article is to offer a glimpse into viable economic solutions for the decarbonisation of the Libyan economy, showing how a “Solar Marshall Plan” can contribute to peace.

A roadmap for joint sustainable development in the “enlarged (Euro)Mediterranean” region would solve the problems of clean energy supply on which the success of the Green Deal depends. With international public and private funding, Libya would invest in the construction of the generation and transmission infrastructures needed to produce clean electricity and green hydrogen from the desert. The profitability of

such an investment is evidenced by similar projects being carried out in neighbouring countries, starting with Morocco, considered by the German government in its green hydrogen plans.

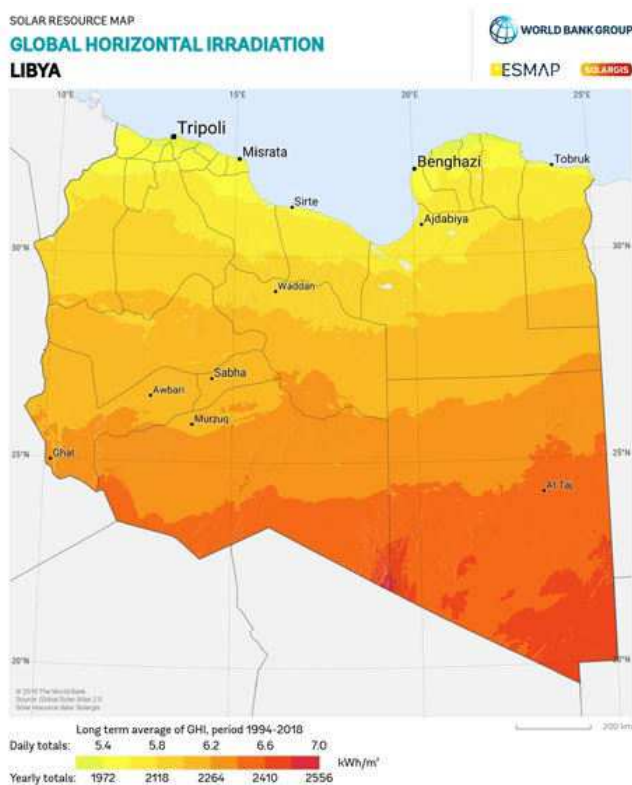
Electricity interconnection plans already exist in the area. The Egypt-Libya electricity transborder line² is in operation and will be enhanced. The EU has an interconnection target of at least 10% by 2020 and 15% by 2030.

Ambitious solar projects – photovoltaic or CSP (Concentrated Solar Power) – are being considered by regional countries, the Arab League, international finance institutions, starting with the World Bank.

The upcoming energy structure also implies different national security perspectives. The current fossil-based system is hierarchical, with the interests of producers, importers, and energy transit countries potentially colliding. As renewables are more equally distributed, foreign energy dependency is reduced. Renewable energy supply pushes for further interconnecting the higher voltage systems across countries and continents.

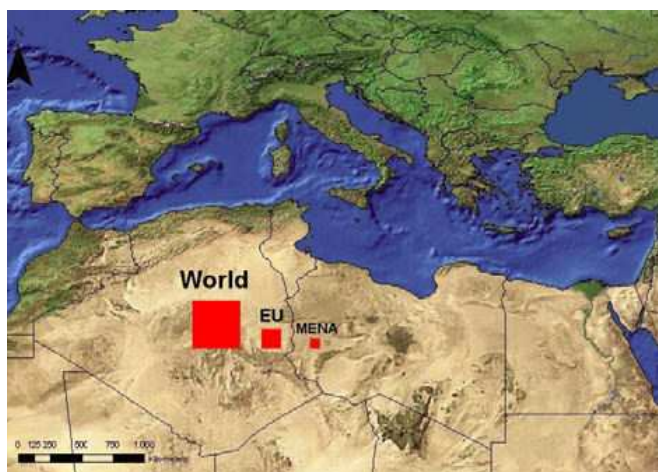
The transition introduces at the same time significant technical challenges and immense economic opportunities. The grid becomes the largest interconnected machine on Earth. Such networks require continuous monitoring and control. Devices connecting the grid to the internet have proven to be a very cost-effective means to develop such capability.

In sum, deep decarbonisation of the power and industrial sectors of Europe and beyond requires scaling up renewable generation, while upgrading the grid infrastructure to manage the increasing variability of wind and solar sources. Europe is a testbed for advanced



This map is published by the World Bank Group, funded by ESMAP, and prepared by Solargis. For more information and terms of use, please visit <http://globalsolaratlas.info>.

- 2 The Eight Country Interconnection Project (named EIJLLPST). This project involves interconnecting the electrical grids of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey. It started as a five-country interconnection project that included Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Turkey, became a six-country project when Lebanon joined in, and later became an eight-country project when Libya and Palestine joined in. The Egypt-Libya, 220kV link, rated at 170MW, became operational in 2008. The same year also witnessed the operation of the Egypt-Jordan link, rated at 300MW, using 500kV on the Egyptian side and 400kV on the Jordanian side. During 2001, the Syrian and Jordanian networks were interconnected on 400kV using a line rated at 300MW. The Syrian grid was then connected to the Lebanese grid, also on 400kV, during 2009, and the Palestinian grid was later connected to both the Egyptian and Jordanian grids through 66 kV transmission lines having limited capacity. The already completed interconnection between the Syrian and Turkish grids has not been energized due to the political situation in the region.



technologies and solutions. The EU grid has proven to be resilient – despite the growing share of variable renewable power. This advanced know-how is transferrable and could benefit the economies in the MENA region.

An old idea powered by new technologies

There is not such a thing as a new idea. In the 1990's, a German physicist, Gerhard Knies, launched an ambitious project to harness the power of renewables and phase out oil. A small red square in the desert became the iconic image associated with Desertec. A fraction of the Earth's surface would be enough to power the whole world with clean energy.

Since then, innovation has made Desertec 3.0 a viable development concept. Not only have renewables matured, but UHV (Ultra High Voltage), supercritical transmission lines can transport clean electricity over thousands of kilometres with minimal losses, while smart management ensures that electricity supply-demand is balanced and fluctuations are minimised.

The main obstacles remain politics and geopolitical conflicts. Yet, in a world threatened by the collapse of natural ecosystems and unrestrained climate change, such perspectives are relevant for anyone in a position of influence.

Italy is well placed to profit from stability in Libya and sustainable development in the region, but remains an observer whilst others are in the field.

A long thought-through project to build an interconnection between Sicily and Tunisia (200 km) is sitting



in a drawer while the UK-based company Xlinks is planning to build 10.5 GW of wind and solar capacity in Morocco and sell the generated power in the UK through a 3,800 km submarine cable. The Saudi ACWA Power Renewable Energy Holding, and the Chinese Silk Road Fund are partners in the British lead Xlinks project.

The vision of a green hydrogen economy is also re-awakening the vision of desert power. Solar power could indeed also dock on Europe's Mediterranean shores in a different form. The cheap, renewably generated electricity could be used to produce green hydrogen on site. Existing gas pipelines on the seabed could be used for transport. Ammonia or power fuels could be shipped by tanker to any place in the world.

Two minutes of sunlight are enough to power the world for one year

The science behind the vision is solid. Every two minutes, the energy reaching the earth from the sun is equivalent to the whole annual energy use of humanity. According to the World Energy Consumption & Statistics 2020, the total world energy usage – including coal, oil, hydroelectric, nuclear and renewable - in 2015 was 13,000 Million Ton Oil Equivalent (13,000 MTOE), which correspond to 17.3 Terawatts (TW) of continuous power consumption during the year.

If we cover an area of the Earth 335 kilometers by 335 kilometers with solar panels, even with the moderate

efficiencies achieved today, it will provide more than 17,4 TW power. An area of approximately 111.369 square kilometres is enough to power the world. 1.2% of the Sahara desert is sufficient to cover all of the energy needs of the world in solar energy at competitive costs. There is no way coal, oil, wind, geothermal or nuclear can compete with this in the longer term.

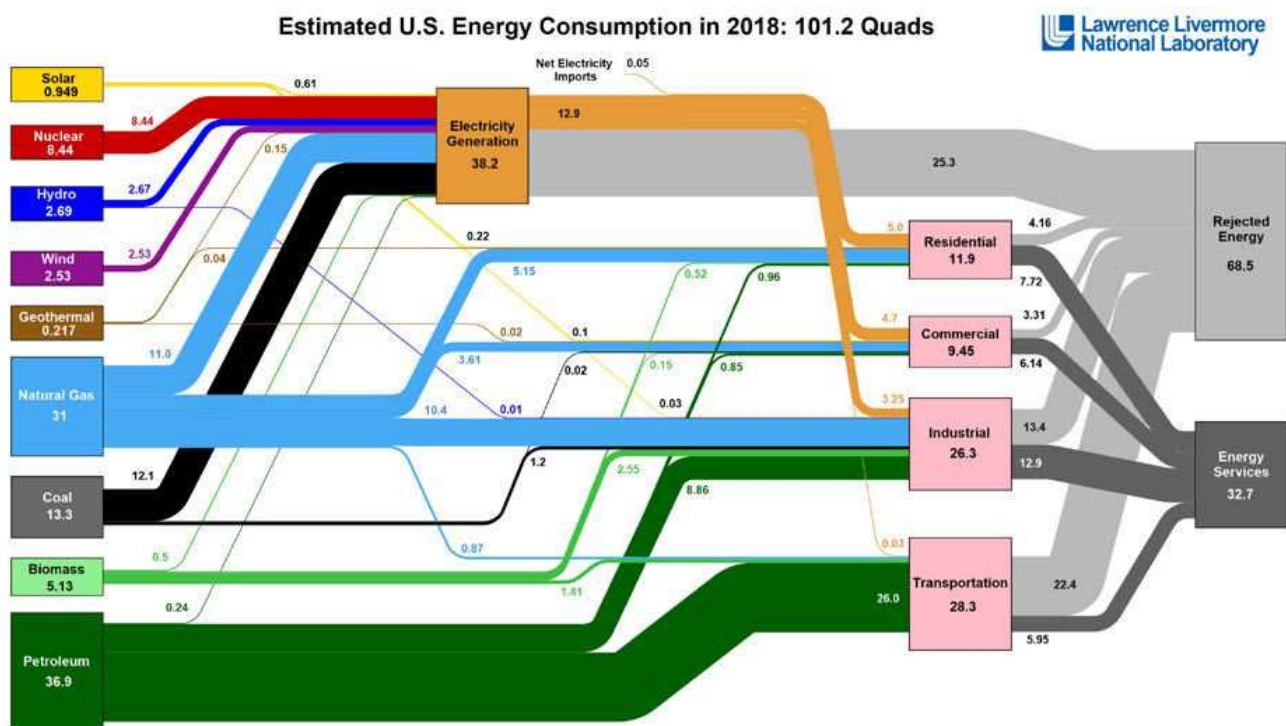
To harness renewable energy from the desert would also solve the conundrum posed by conflicting land use, limiting the negative impacts of large-scale solar plants on ecosystems and biodiversity, even considering the increase of temperature induced by solar farms.

The cost for such an investment would near five trillion dollars. This is a one-time investment not considering economy of scale or savings. This amount corresponds to less than 10% of the world's one year GDP.

The economic rationale is strengthened by the upward trend of carbon price in Europe (ETS) and upcoming global carbon tax systems.

To put this amount into perspective, the cost of a 1 GWe (Gigawatt electric) nuclear plant is around three billion dollars. Once again, the math is simple. The cost to generate 17.3 TW nuclear power would be fifty-two trillion dollars, which is ten times that of solar even if all the other issues with safety and uranium supply would be resolved³.

Recent studies suggest that the 1.5°C is technically feasible at relatively low-cost for the overall economy. The “Research Report on Global Energy Interconnection (GEI) for addressing Climate Change”⁴, comprehensively analyses the energy system and mitigation technology of GEI in 2°C and 1.5°C scenarios. The



- 3 However, there would be still a niche application for nuclear power, which has the highest power density of any generation technologies and lasts longest without refueling. Where space is limited, as it is the case for submarines, or in space at a distance from the sun, nuclear power would be likely the sole viable solution.
- 4 Published in December 2019 by GEIDCO (Global Energy Interconnection Development and Organization) IIASA (International System for Applied System Analysis) and WMO (World Meteorological Organization), the report can be found under: <http://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/16239/>

results are remarkable. By 2050, the global intercontinental power trading volume will amount to 800TWh; the cross-region power flow will be 660GW; clean energy will account for 86% in primary energy; the cumulative global CO₂ emissions will be kept under 510 billion tons; and the discharge of sulfur dioxide, nitric oxide and PM_{2.5} will drop by 86%, 98% and 93% respectively.

The reports show that achieving the 2°C target implies globally aggregated GDP values ranging between 0.2% and 1.0% across electrification scenarios in 2050, relative to a current policy reference. The range highlights that strong enabling conditions for electrification can play a significant role in lowering the macroeconomic costs of action. Most importantly, these numbers do not account for the costs of inaction.

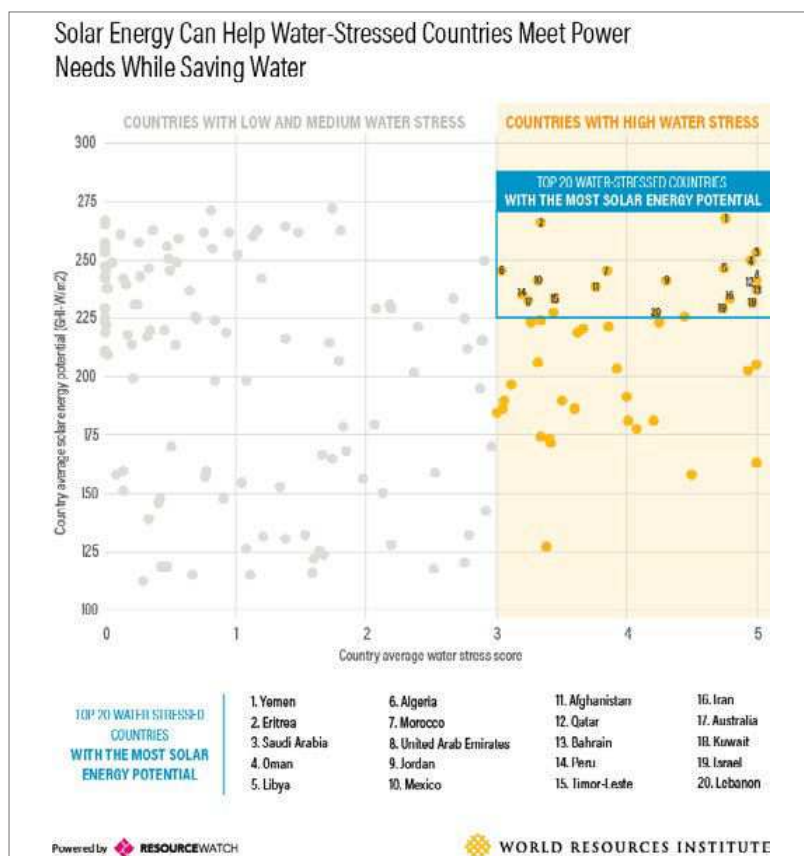
Fossil fuels are wasteful

In twenty to thirty years solar and wind (in similarly favourable geographies) will replace all other sources. There will still be need for liquid fuels. Likely, it will be hydrogen produced by the electrolysis of water and that powered by solar. Tankers and pipelines will haul green hydrogen around the world.

It is often forgotten that fossil fuels are extremely inefficient. Due to losses in conversion, distribution and use, the large majority of the energy produced burning fossil fuels is lost (waste heat from combustion). Electricity, on the contrary, has an efficiency of almost 100%. In fact we don't need to replace all the energy currently consumed, but only the productive share.

The effects on the Libyan chessboard

The technologies to exploit Libya's solar energy potential are today largely available at scale and economically viable.



In 2020, investment in the energy transition reached an all-time high of \$501 billion; sustainable debt an all-time high issuance of \$732 billion; clean energy capital markets were at all-time highs.

An acceleration in terms of green finance and conditionalities could result from the international convergence which is taking shape on the road to COP26 and the Italian G20.

The multiplier effect on the Libyan and European economies would be significant, considering the large investment in the production and transmission infrastructure needed for the progressive replacement of oil and gas exports. In addition to this, decentralised clean energy supply can dramatically raise living standards in remote areas, supporting circular practices in all sectors, from agriculture to ensuring drinking water availability via desalinization, from households to industrial manufacturing.

Peace in Libya also depends on the reconstruction of the country's state institutions and economic fabric. Politics and diplomacy - in Tripoli, Brussels, and Rome - are

acutely aware that the risk of stranded fossil assets is becoming substantial under any decarbonisation scenario, even in the case of a moderate transition pace.

The limits of a fossil-based, centralised system

Political conflicts and years of civil war have put a toll on the country's infrastructure. The Libyan state-owned utility GECOL (General Electricity Company of Libya) is not able to guarantee widespread, continuous, and reliable supply. Libya is hit by unscheduled and scheduled power outages. Blackouts are common in peak demand periods in summer when the request for cooling is highest.

The centralisation of the power system, dependent on oil and gas fuelled power plant, affect the country's resilience. Its energy infrastructure, including power plants and transmission lines, was damaged and destroyed following the 2011 regime change. The blockade of the oil refineries in 2013 has further weakened the economy. Libya plans to enhance electricity import from neighbouring Egypt and Tunisia

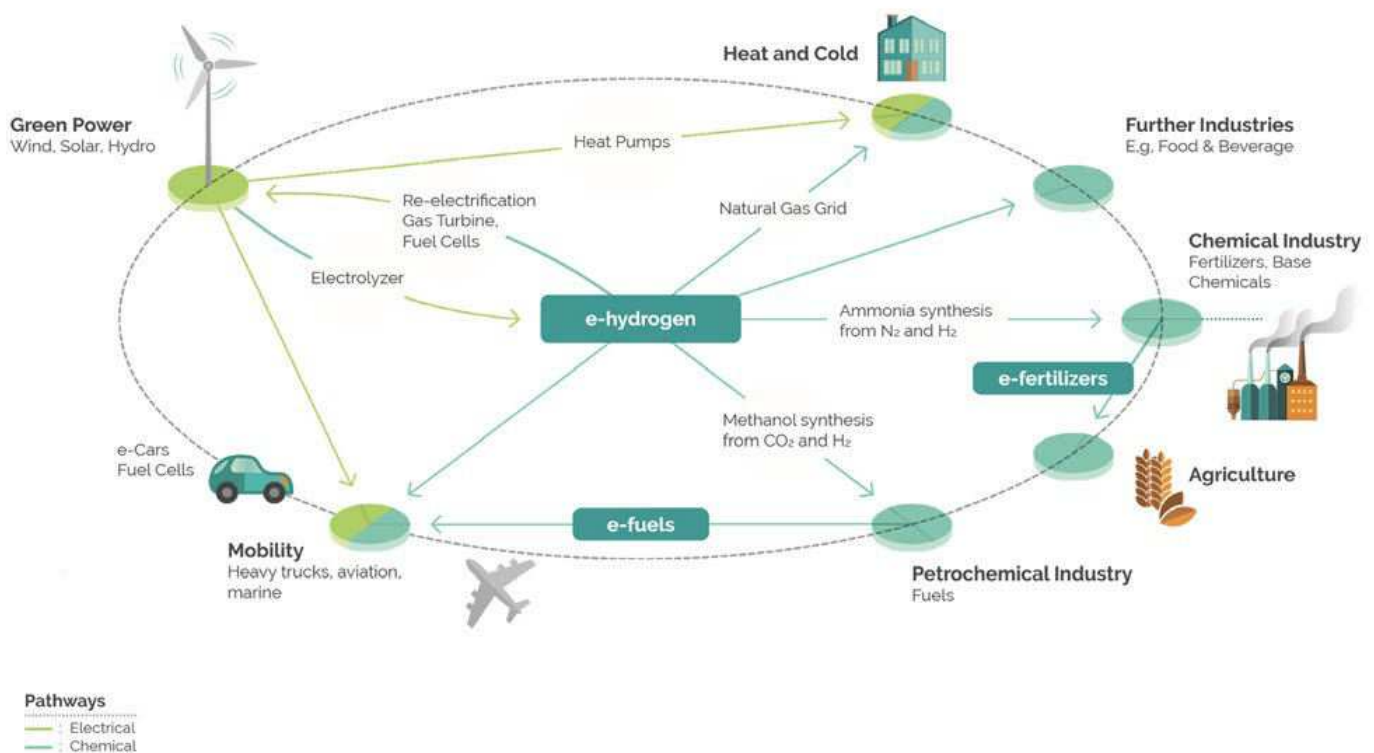
and to rent power generators to avoid power outages (Enerdata, 2015).

The building and installation of additional fossil fuel power plants is not possible. Thus, Libya is uniquely placed to develop renewable energy production and harness the power of its most ubiquitous and cheap natural resource. The transition to a post-fossil economy would be gradual, with renewables covering at first some of its load requirements. Local industrial value chains, training and transfer of know-how would benefit the local economy and create jobs.

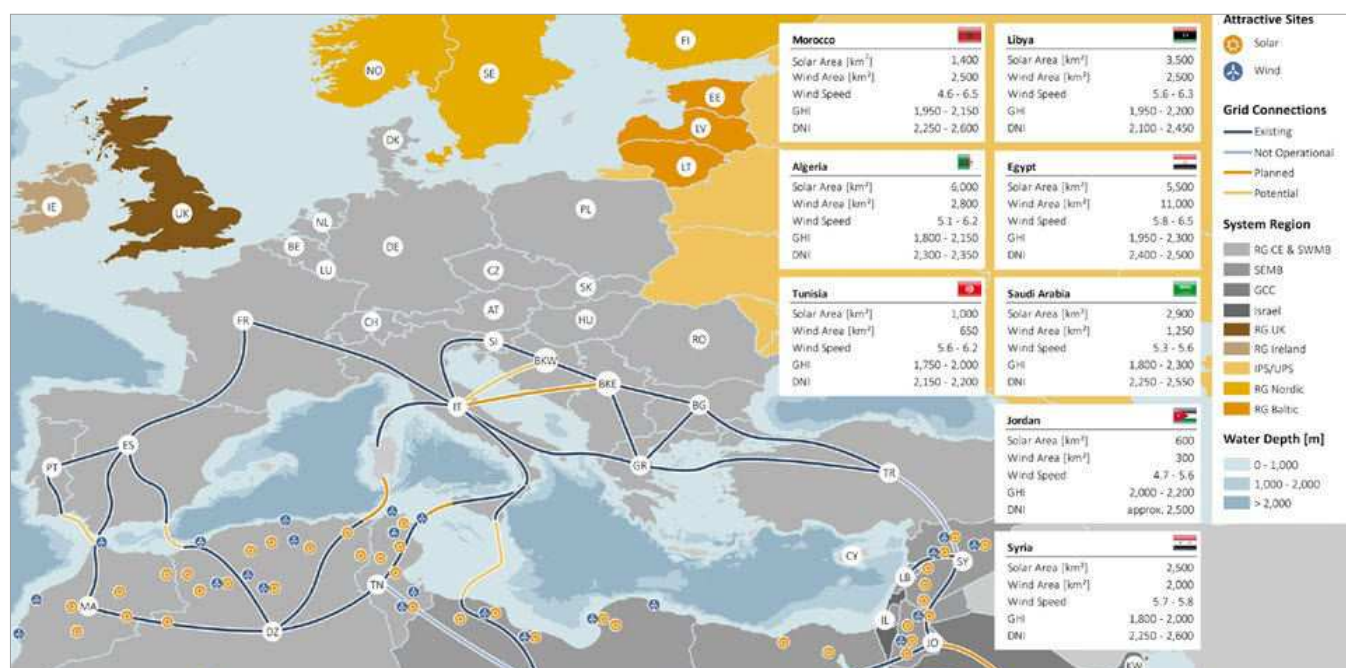
The need for a system change, to ensure grid stability and supply security, was integrated in earlier national policies.

Modest national objectives

In 2013, the Libyan Government launched the Renewable Energy Strategic 2013-2025 Plan, aiming to achieve 7% renewable energy contribution to the energy mix by 2020 and 10% by 2025. The realisation of this modest objective has been hampered by political conflicts, lack



The role of hydrogen in sector coupling | Source: Siemens 2019.



of a dedicated renewable energy funding and scarcity of obligations to conclude long-term power purchase agreements with renewable energy producers.

The EU could play a constructive role in the country torn by a decade of war, while working to diversify its energy sources. The German diplomacy is a trailblazer. Two ideas converge: the establishment of national and European Hydrogen Valleys, and the vision of green molecules imports from solar (and wind) rich countries.

More than a year ago, a new European geopolitical consensus on Libya was forged in Berlin. Going beyond the military stalemate between the internationally recognised government in Tripoli and the Benghazi-based Haftar regime, in August 2020, Europe facilitated a new political roadmap leading towards elections.

It's now time to take a bolder step forward. Diplomacy and soft power cannot do much without economic development. International support will make or break the chances for peace and state building.

The Libyans, for their part, begin to recognise the advantages of the transition. In 2020, the Prime Minister of the Eastern Government Abdullah Thinni laid the foundations for the construction of a photovoltaic solar power plant in the town of Kufra in South-Eastern Libya. The

plant will have a 100 MWp capacity and will occupy an area of 200 hectares. A Chinese EPC company has been charged with the works.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is also running renewable energy projects, such as a solar-powered public lighting project in Benghazi or the construction of photovoltaic mini-grids to supply electricity to 15 hospitals in Sebha, Tripoli, Zintan, Ubari, Benghazi and Rajban.

The End of the Fossil Era will be painful if you don't manage it

The fossil fuel era that long shaped the global power structure is coming to an end. States that rely on green technologies are gaining significant influence and competitive advantage. The European Union is leading the way.

Countries that do not fully commit to green technologies are falling behind in global competition. Those that invest early in research, production, and distribution of renewable export goods, on the other hand, have a good chance of increasing their global influence.

The extent to which individual countries benefit or suffer from change depends on many factors. In countries such as Libya, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia or the

Congo, the revenues from this account for about 40% of the GDP. Specifically, 43% for Libya.

Importers of fossil fuels, instead, benefit in several ways from the global energy transition. If more and more countries produce renewable energies, this increases, firstly, the security of supply. Secondly, importers can lower their energy costs. According to a study by the Lappeenranta University, the energy costs of the EU countries could fall by up to 10% as soon as they mainly purchase green electricity from neighbouring countries and hardly any oil, gas, or coal from the world market. The prerequisite for this would be – once again - an EU-wide, intelligent power grid.

Thirdly, countries that change open up new sources of income. Renewable technology innovations spark high-quality development. Billions in profits can be made from the sale of green electricity, green power plants or the necessary components and services. Countries like China, Japan and Germany are already earning billions with corresponding value chains.

The global shift to an ever greener energy supply has huge effects on the world economy and international politics. Whether the positive consequences outweigh the negative depends primarily on how competently the transition from the fossil to the renewable era is managed.



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