



DEMOCRACY IN EGYPT: A PYRRHIC VICTORY

The Egyptian revolution begins on January 25, 2011, over a month after the demonstrations in Tunisia and at a time when Ben Ali has already fled to Saudi Arabia.

Following Tunisia's example, as if by contagion, Egypt also rebelled against its Rais. The two countries have in common a severe economic crisis, widespread corruption, illegal enrichment of the few, an authoritarian regime, a dictator whose family handles various traffics, the will to change and the longing for freedom.

Just like in Tunisia, the regime's first reaction was violent repression (the police fired against the crowd) and just like in Tunis, in front of the incessant popular demonstrations, Mubarak – just like Ben Ali- promised that he would not run for the presidency again. Yet it wasn't enough.

On February 10 the Rais announced that power had been handed down to the vice-president, Omar Suleiman, who had headed the Intelligence service (Jihaz al Mukhabarat al Amma) since 1993. The same man that had for many years squashed all opposition and who was considered the real pillar of power in the country. Faced with the growing protests after this choice, which was considered a way to reaffirm the military power's continuity, Mubarak and his family left the Cairo and moved to Sharm el Sheik.

From that moment on the country would be run by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces under the guide of General Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, Egypt's military chief of staff.

That was the last of the similarities between the Tunisian events, where the transfer of power was administered discontinuously by civilians, and the Egyptian events, where power went from one person to the other without changing its balance between past and present.

On the one side this diversity qualifies and defines the democratization process in the two countries. On the other it confirms that the structure of power has different articulations in Tunisia and in Egypt.

Ben Ali had grasped power by replacing the old Bourghiba. He claimed power with the backing of the security apparatuses for himself and for his followers. He was not the product of a system or an institution.

In Egypt the power is in the hands of the army which designates its representatives: today Tantawi, yesterday Mubarak, before that Sadat and even earlier Nasser and Neguib. Thus in the Egyptian case the problem is not about ousting one man but eradicating a power system. The latter is a lot

more complicated to do. Under this aspect the Algerian case resembles the Egyptian one more so than the Tunisian does.

The follow-up to the Egyptian Arab Spring that has developed since February 2011 is a process of pseudo-democratization of a society under the army's umbrella.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was an agency that would meet periodically, especially in times of particular crisis such as wars. Now it has become the administrator of political power in the country. It is not by hazard that it is composed of about 20 high officials of the armed forces.

On February 28, 2011, the authorities prohibited Mubarak's family to travel and froze their bank accounts. A few days later (on March 3rd) the Prime Minister Ahmad Shafiq, designated by Mubarak, resigned as the country was overrun by demonstrations and protests (leaving an alleged 800 dead on the ground).

On March 19 we witness the first test of a rising democracy: the Egyptians approve the reform of their constitution with an ample majority.

On April 16th the administrative Court dismantled the regime's political party: the National Democratic Party.

On May 24th it was officially announced that Mubarak and his 2 sons (Gamal and Alaa), together with the Interior Minister and other minor personalities would be tried for the death of protesters during the demonstrations (the trial began on August 3rd). The judgment, for them and for the demonstrators, would be handed down by a military court. The only difference being that the demonstrators' trials were often coupled with torture and mistreatments.

The demonstrations, protests and incidents that continued to take place throughout the country culminated (in July) with the clashes between police and the crowd in Tahrir square, the place that has become a symbol of the revolution. During these events the Muslim Brotherhood, which had thus far kept a low profile, decided to participate in the demonstrations.

On July 15, 2011, to humor the popular discontent, 587 generals were forced to retire. Yet the people demanded a political change, they demanded democracy, they demanded things that the military had no intention of conceding. Even the constitutional reforms advanced sluggishly without producing visible results.

Yet the people continued their mass protests, asking that the members of the old regime be removed and asking – through the impressive demonstration of October 28th – that the military hand over power to a civilian government. The request was, of course, rejected.

It is in the midst of these heated circumstances that the legislative elections began on November 28th and continued in three successive phases (November 28/29 – December 5/6; December 14/15 – December 21/22; January 3 /4 – January 10/11 2012).

A slow and jumbled procedure (perhaps with the intent of allowing the military to better monitor the results) that will result in a total victory by the Islamics with a strong popular participation in the voting.

Here are the results, out of a total of 508 deputies, to which we must deduct the 10 seats assigned through designation by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces:

- 213 seats were snatched by the Muslim Brotherhood's party "Justice and Liberty". Due to its political alliance with other parties within the "Democratic Alliance for Egypt", it can count on a total of 235 seats (about 37,5% of the entire assembly)
- The "Islamic Block" that brings all the Salafites under one umbrella obtained 122 seats (107 of which assigned to the "al Nour" party (about 27% of the entire assembly))
- The other, more moderate, Islamic party "al Wasat" will win 10 seats

The secular and left-wing parties will have to deal with a very reduced participation.

It is clear at this point that the main danger for the army in attempting to keep the status quo derives from the Islamics and in particular from the formations connected to the Muslim Brothers. It is in the light of this confrontation/contrast (army-Islamics) that the subsequent political events in the country must be analyzed.

After the parliamentary elections the evolving situation in Egypt abandoned the Tunisian example and developed in a way similar to the Algerian situation. In Algeria, as in Egypt, the power, or rather "le pouvoir", had been administered by the army since independence. The financial, economic, judicial systems and the control of the security agencies in both countries have always been under the control of the army. Every pseudo-democratic concession is also weighed and decided by the army. When the system begins to falter, countermeasures are enacted.

In January 1991, faced with the victory of the F.I.S., the Algerian parliament was disbanded. The same happened in Egypt during the second round of presidential elections on June 14, 2012. The election was invalidated for those deputies that, coincidentally, were part of the Islamic majority within the popular assembly. This is when Ahmad Shafiq, former general and Prime Minister, ran against the candidate of the Muslim Brothers. It all happened in a "legal" fashion: in both cases it was the Constitutional Court that decided. Once again, coincidentally, the court had been designated by Mubarak. If the message were not clear enough, a new measure that allowed the arrest of individuals by the military police and the secret services was reinstated after being recently repealed.

Then there were the presidential elections (the military were strong of the 100-or-so voting fraud reports already presented by the losing candidate). The difference between the two candidates being of about 900.000 votes, accepting some of the voting fraud reports as true, the army would have been able to topple the winning candidate. However, faced with the risk of further uprisings, the army was forced to accept the outcome and declare the victory of the Muslim Brother's candidate, Mohammed Morsi.

The army's countermeasures

This game of strategy between the military elite and the Muslim Brothers was yet to be over.

Tantawi's idea was to hand power over to a political government but also to make it so that the power would be only formal and subordinated to the tutelage of the military class.

After having dismantled the parliament and having re-appropriated themselves by law of the public order, the army enacted a series of countermeasures to contain, and on occurrence to block, the power of Egypt's new president.

The secret weapon in the hands of the army was the absence of a constitution. It was a weapon that allowed the army to undermine the power of any agency or institution that was deemed detrimental to its interests. While waiting for a new parliament to be designated and for a work group to be assigned the writing of a new constitution, the army had redacted a series of amendments to the Constitutional Declaration of March 30, 2011, that harbored them from any presidential initiatives that may damage them.

In short:

- lacking a parliament, the President would have had to swear in front of the Constitutional Court (and he did). Thus – this was the hidden message – in front of a Court that represents the power in charge and not, as Morsi would have wanted, in front of elected representatives (the National Assembly – art. 30)
- The parliamentary elections were to be conducted in accordance to the law (art. 38, but art. 56 conferred legislative power to the army)
- The army remained in charge of any military problem, of the designation of its members and Tantawi remained in charge of the armed forces and minister of defense until the approval of a new constitution (art.53)
- The President could declare war only with the approval of the Supreme Council of the armed forces (art. 53/1)
- If internal disorders that required the intervention of the armed forces were to manifest, the President could delegate to the armed forces – with the consent of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces – to maintain security and to defend the public property. The existing legislation defined the power of the armed forces and their authority in cases of detention, arrest and in the use of force (art. 53/2)
- The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces assumed authority (legislative power) so long as there was not a new parliament in place (art. 56)
- If the constitutional assembly (which had not even been designated by the old parliament before it was dismantled) were to encounter obstacles in their activity, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces would have the power to re-designate its representatives and to make a new “rough” constitution that would be redacted in 3 months and then voted by a popular referendum (art. 60B)
- If the President of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and/or the Supreme Council of the

Magistrates (controlled by the army) and/or one fifth of the constitutional assembly were to object that any of the articles of the constitution were not deemed in line with the principles and objectives of the Egyptian revolution, they would be able to request a revision of that article. If the constitutional assembly were to confirm that article, then the High Constitutional Court (then-controlled by the army) would have the final word on the matter (art. 60B1)

Soon thereafter the High administrative Court had decided to postpone to the 1st of September the decision regarding the dismantlement of the Confraternity of the Muslim Brothers, while on September 4th they were to decide on the dismantling of the “Justice and Liberty” party.

This was being done following a report by lawyer Shehada Mohammed Shahada who cited two laws: one from 1954 that prohibits non-governmental organizations from carrying out political activity and another from 2002 that prohibits the founding of religiously-based political entities. Since the High administrative Court was under the control of the military regime, this initiative also left the door open to the possibility of countering the political activity of any adversary to the armed forces. In his report, Shehada asked for the closing of the headquarters of the Confraternity and the freezing of its accounts.

On June 14 Tantawi announced that a new National Council of Defense had been created – obviously with a strong military presence in it – the functions of which were not known. Perhaps – but it might just be a coincidence – the new council was presided by the President of the Republic and composed of 16 members all of which had ties to the military (the head of the SM, the four commanders of the armed forces – army, navy, aviation, air defense - the head of the general intelligence services and that of the military intelligence, the head of military justice, the head of military operations, the minister for military procurement, the minister of defense and his assistant, the speaker of parliament, the foreign minister, the interior minister and the minister of finance).

The reason for the founding of the new structure – seen that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces was still in place – was not known. It was reasonable to suspect that the new structure served the purpose of perpetuating the old – perhaps together with Morsi – even in the future and beyond the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. The events that followed showed that the initiative did not produce the desired result.

The tactic of the two opposing powers

Regarding the initiatives of Tantawi and his generals, one must note that the army's strategy was effective until that point. There was no need – as in Algeria – for a restorative coup d'etat. They had sacrificed Mubarak to please the protesters (and perhaps they would have soon done the same with Shafiq, who had prudently moved abroad in the meantime), they had alternated false grants with convincing threats and had manipulated the State's apparatus'. Rather than sheer strength they had adopted a chameleon-like, Levantine style. Cunningness rather than arms. A number of juridic schemes – or so they thought - could restrain or topple the uncomfortable presence of Morsi in the future.

The military also played with the ambitions of the Muslim Brothers, whom already knew the rules of the game. They knew that using violence as a form of protest – a thing that was never pursued by justice in the past – would not have produced satisfactory results. It would rather have

strengthened the power of the army at the helm of the country.

Anyways, in this game of opposites there circulated talk of secret negotiations between the Confraternity and the army for future coexistence in power. Such negotiations would not have been carried out with Morsi but rather with Khairat al Shater, the first presidential candidate chosen by the Supreme Guide Badie. But Shater was later dismissed because he had been in prison until March 2011 (and one of the prerequisites for candidacy was that the person should not have been in prison in the preceding 6 years).

The Muslim Brothers in Egypt had had a long experience coexisting with the intemperances of an authoritarian regime. From Nasser to Mubarak they had often been the object of repression and persecution. They had been sometimes tolerated, sometimes even accepted politically but more often than not they had been marginalized. They made themselves strong with popular support and with the various charitable works and the health and education assistance, with their wealth (their funds have been incremented substantially by donations from Qatar and Saudi Arabia) and they had always managed to survive. This “living dangerously” had pushed them towards the tendency for compromise, towards their diplomatic flexibility and the incessant search for a *modus vivendi*.

Check mate

This seemed to be the relationship between the consolidated power of the army and the emerging power of the Muslim Brotherhood. Nobody thought that in this context Morsi could have done without the tutelage of the army. Yet on August 12, 2012, there was a surprise: Morsi removed General Hussein Tantawi, recently designated Minister of Defense (and with him he removed the army chief of staff Sami Anan and the commanders of the various armed forces), thus gaining the support of the former head of the military secret services, General Abdul Fattah Al Sissi, who was readily named to replace Tantawi.

All of this happened without particular disarray. Tantawi was named “Counselor of the President of the Republic” and decorated. There was no revenge against him for having been for 20 years at the head of the armed forces, for having been placed by Mubarak at the head of the Egyptian state after the Rais' resignation or for having adopted in the past all of the instruments of repression against the activities of the Muslim Brothers.

Morsi's move replaced an entire generation of generals, many of which did not mind coexistence at the higher spheres of power. The price was paid but never made official: the maintaining of all the economic privileges that had made the military caste powerful (especially within the administration of the billion-and-a-half dollars that the USA “donated” yearly for the strengthening of the Egyptian armed forces)..

At this point the path of Morsi seemed to be downhill. The US had legitimized the Muslim Brothers as possible interlocutors in the previous months. The USA were the main supporters of the country, a circumstance that had prevented the military from cheating in the presidential elections.

Yet the choice of the military to relinquish power to Morsi without resisting had a side thought to it: to wait and see if Morsi would eventually become unreliable in the eyes of the Americans (see his support for Hamas, his relationship with Teheran and the contrasts with Israel) and if he would fail

the expectations of the Egyptian people (see the introduction of the Islamic laws that marginalized secularism, Christians and discourage tourism, which represents the country's main staple. See also the inadequate answer to the rising economic crisis and the high unemployment rates).

Under the economic aspect, Morsi had made grand promises during the electoral campaign: the introduction of measures to support agriculture, the creation of new irrigation systems, the bettering of the health system and promises of investments in key sectors. The State's balance for 2012-2013, which had been drawn up by the military before the election, already anticipated that there would be scarce resources and that 80% of the money at hand would be spent to pay the public employees.

There was thus a very scarce margin for Morsi to play with and a consequent disaffection of the people with regards to the promises of the new President.

Yet the strategy game between the Muslim Brothers and the Military was not over yet: the last move was made by Morsi who reopened – albeit symbolically – the parliament that the military had dismantled through the decision of the Constitutional Court. There followed the designation of a Prime Minister and the dismissal of several heads of the armed forces and of the secret services because of their run-in with the fundamentalists in the Sinai. It all served to reaffirm his role as a President. Then there was the closure of the tunnels with Gaza. Perhaps a moderate and pro-Israeli President in the game that was being played both in Egypt and in the international relationships of the country could be instrumental in reassuring the USA?

Yet after the crisis in Gaza that saw Morsi cut himself out a role as mediator (and gain international credibility), here's another politically involutorial move: on November 22, 2012, through a presidential decree, Morsi re-appropriated himself of all his powers as president. He made all of his decisions immediately executive and irrevocable, and replaced the general prosecutor Meguid Mahamoud (the last bulwark of the army) with a trusted collaborator of his, Ibrahim Talaat. The move caused a strike and protests among the other magistrates.

Contrary to the will of the opposition, Morsi had the Constitutional Assembly (controlled by the Muslim Brothers who forced the resignation of the assembly's secular members and replaced them with Islamic members) draft a new constitution. 234 articles that were discussed and approved in one night's time. The new constitution was obviously of Islamic inspiration: the sharia remained, as it had been in the past, the reference point for jurisprudence, but a new article (219) also specified that the Islamic principles to look to were those of the first Ulemas (thus emerged the radical Salafite direction). The importance of the Islamic University of Al Azhar on sharia was also elevated to a new level and now seemed to play a pivotal role in the decisions of the magistrates. Also, Morsi introduced legislation on the preservation of family values that seemed to leave room for censure with regards to the press and media in general.

Morsi didn't want to end it there and, despite the opposition's protests and the demonstrations, on December 15th he had the constitution approved through a popular referendum: he obtained 63.8% of the suffrage but only over a 32.9% portion of the possible voters.

The real losers

The spirit of Tahir square is neither represented by Morsi nor by the Levantine policies of the

Muslim Brothers. Nor was it represented by the uncontested power of the army or by that of the Muslim Brothers.

The Egyptian revolution was brought about by the incapacity of the secular parties and reformist parties to join forces. The two have always run divided at elections, thus never being duly represented within the Egyptian political context.

This mistake was later understood and partly amended through the creation of the Front for National Safety. The Arab revolution of the Cairo was not started nor piloted by the Muslim Brothers but by a series of libertarian currents and a longing for social claims that the Muslim Brothers – showing a lot of opportunism – immediately pounced on.

The Egyptians, the ones in Tahir square, wanted real change and not a revolution where one power filled in for another. The abstention at the first round of elections reached 54% (23 million voters out of 52 million voting rights). The second round didn't reach 40%. The statistics quantify and qualify the popular disillusion when faced with the two candidates (Morsi and Shafiq), neither of which represented the events of Tahir square.

The common folks did not feel represented by Morsi or by the Confraternity. The Coptic Christians had chosen the least of the two evils, the army. Yet there exists in Egypt a civil society, secular and illuminated, and many of them, disappointed, chose not to vote. Some even went so far as fearing the threat of an uncertain future more than they feared the decadent past and had supported the army rather than face a jump in the dark. The division within the secular and reformist society had transformed itself in a lesser political issue within the country (here's the parallel with the Libyan elections).

The American role

Perhaps due to an emotional approach to the Arab Spring, the USA have immediately supported the Islamic parties in a non-judgmental way, without waiting for the revolution – which is still in an unstable phase of development – to go full circle.

If the US foreign policy were to be identified as a matter of principles, this choice would make sense. Yet what generally guides the decisions of a country are matters of interest. In this respect the choice of the USA and the recurring supportive statements by the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with regards to the Muslim Brothers appear incomprehensible.

An Egypt guided by Islamic fundamentalists is surely in contrast with the historical tie between the USA and Israel. Such a State also strengthens Hamas' extremist positions and will risk spreading the fundamentalist view in the next political structure of Syria and/or strengthen those positions within the Libyan political context.

Then there is the rekindling of relationships between Egypt and Iran (Morsi went to Teheran for the summit of the “non-aligned” last year, Ahmadinejad was recently in Cairo to participate in the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference) of which we do not yet know political connotations and practical consequences.

Will a trans-nation Confraternity be in the interests of the Americans? Perhaps the USA thought

that a man like Morsi, who studied in the United States (University of Southern California), could guarantee reliability? It is not yet clear.

Pyrrho's victory

With regards to the Egyptian situation, the fundamental question remains unchanged: the 1000-or-so dead of the Arab Spring, the yearning for freedom, the social expectations, the will to fight corruption and cliques... what happened to all these things and what purpose did they serve? All utopias must be contextualized within the social fabric where they are born and where they develop. Egypt, or rather the majority of Egyptians, lack the reference point – which was never glanced during their history – of what democracy really is. If Democracy turns into Anarchy, the status quo wins out over reformism or – as in Egypt's case – one dictatorship replaces the other.

Thus in the struggle between restoration and fundamentalism – both are evils – the real loser is the country.

The army held on to part of the power and remained the judge over the country's destiny and the Muslim Brothers associated themselves with this power to coexist with their counterpart. A balance between two weaknesses, a bi-polar political equilibrium where the weakness of one part becomes the strengths of the other and vice-versa. At any rate, this situation kept the radical positions at bay.

The army controlled the State and its intricate network of institutions that were able to guarantee power despite the election of a President whom was not part of their milieu. The Muslim Brothers, on the other hand, administered a parallel financial power, a kind of social support created on the basis of the organization and efficiency of several charitable associations and on the synergy of their network of Mosques. They then had other networks that connected them with other countries in the region with which they shared goals and interests (see the money coming from Qatar and Saudi Arabia). It was in the interest of both parts to find a compromise and avoid a confrontation.

But as we said earlier this balance was broken and the marginalization of military power pushed Morsi to take unilateral decisions and to try anti-democratic adventures while worsening the contrasts with the other social currents.

Today's Egypt feels a pulsating, unfinished Arab Spring, or perhaps one that has not even started. The ousting of Mubarak brought to light a number of contradictions that the military elite governing the country had minimized thus far with a heavy hand.

The contrasts between seculars and religious have emerged, as have the ones between tolerance and Islamic radicalism, between the poor who are poorer and the rich that remain rich, between the privileged clique (always the same few) and the marginalized (now more numerous, an alleged 70% of the population is now below the line of poverty). These contrasts were fueled by a system of corruption that was never countered, amidst youths that don't see the better future promised by the revolution ahead of them.

There is also a resurgence of autonomous movements that were brought to light by a football game last year – during which there were several dead and consequent death sentences - and by the recent

clashes in Port Said, Ismailya and Suez. The empowerment of the tribal and clan systems which constitute a reference to an absent State and to a non-existent State of Rights.

There is the war between the Coptic and the Islamics, a bureaucracy that undermines any and all modernization of the country, low alphabetization, a strong sub-culture in rural areas and a non-charismatic leader, such as Morsi has shown to be.

His clumsy attempt to confer full powers upon himself have clearly demonstrated his worth. And the over 250 dead that have shed blood on the streets of the country during the recurrence of the second anniversary of the revolution have clearly demonstrated the rift that divides Egypt today.

The Muslim Brothers, whom had not supported the initial revolt against Mubarak, have not managed to bring together the sentiments of Egyptian society in a united path leading to liberty and social equality.

On the contrary, they became a dividing factor when they refused to accept a shared administration of power with the secular souls of the country. The many that are still dying in the streets and the incessant demonstrations are evidence enough of this. Their attempted Islamization of Egypt, which could have been a means to drive the economic recovery, was transformed into an end. An end that did not produce wealth but only false expectations that are now coming to light.

The collapse of the tourism industry, a quick recession, the need to re-negotiate the loan by the International Monetary Fund coupled with ulterior measures of austerity, especially on the government subsidies for basic necessities (it is not a hazard that PM Hisham Qandil was recently present at the economic forum in Davos), the recourse to Saudi and Qatar financial aid that will mean further forms of subjection: this is the economic framework that looms over the future of Egypt. The worst is yet to come.

And then there is the prophecy of Marshall Tantawi whom – before his ousting – saw the re-birth of an all-powerful army rising from the rubble of the economic crisis. After the clashes during the second anniversary of the Egyptian revolution (January 25) and the clashes on the Suez canal, Morsi was forced to summon the National Council of Defense and impose – with the consent of the army – a state of emergency in Port Said and Ismailyah (the same state that for many years conferred to the army an enormous power in terms of public order and dissidence).

For a self-proclaimed Islamic leader who replaced the army such as Morsi is, the recourse to such measures in order to guarantee security and the consequent reinstatement of the repressive measures so dear to Mubarak seem like the emblems of a sound defeat.

The rebuke of General Al Sissi, Minister of Defense and of the armed forces, regarding the risk of a collapsing State sounds more like a warning. After reviving the army's role, Morsi is now forced to negotiate with the opposition as well. All of this triggers thoughts about the contradictions of an Islam that is political while trying to maintain an ideological approach.

Pyrrho, the king of Epirus, landed in Italy with his mercenaries and elephants and defeated the Romans in Eraclea in the year 280 BC. The victory had been paid dearly in terms of human lives and has thus been passed on in history as an event with negative connotations: a price too high for a

useless victory.

The parallel with today's events in Egypt's Arab Spring begins to sound alarmingly fitting.

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THE ROLE OF JORDAN IN MIDDLE EAST'S STORM

Jordan hardly ever appears in the Middle East's war bulletins or in the news on the daily instability afflicting the region. This does not mean the country hasn't played and still does play a significant role in the Arab world.

The Jordanian spring

Jordan was only marginally involved in the so called Arab Spring. On January 14 2011 the first protests lead by left wing parties took the streets of Amman and of other cities in the Hashemite kingdom against price rises of subsidized goods like bread. Demonstrations continued for several days and targeted the government lead by PM Samir Rifai.

On February 1 2011, king Abdallah gave in to protesters and replaced the Prime Minister with a former general, Marouf al Bakhit. The decision did not put an end to the rallies, now addressing the request for more political freedom and economic reforms. In March and April 2011 the rising tensions lead to clashes between loyalists to the monarchy and demonstrators.

On the anniversary of King Abdallah's rise to the throne on June 12 2011 the monarch announced he would give up, the following year, his right to name the Prime Minister and the government (now handed over to the Parliament) and new electoral and party laws. A few days later, on June 15 2011, stones targeted the royal cortege crossing the city of Tafileh. On June 29 the Muslim Brotherhood organized a gathering of about 30 thousand activists asking for political reforms.

Clashes erupted in Kerak in August 2011 while a Committee for Reforms proposed constitutional modifications deemed insufficient by protesters. These included limiting the jurisdiction of military tribunals to the sole crimes of espionage and terrorism. In October the clashes between loyalists and reformists continued. Demonstrators, with the support of 70 out of 120 parliamentarians, demanded the removal of the Prime Minister. King Abdallah agreed once again and on October 17 2011 nominated Awn Shawkat Khasaweneh to replace Bakhit.

From this moment onwards Jordan's internal turmoil eclipsed in the face of the crisis in Syria. On November 14 2011 King Abdallah publicly asked Bashar al Assad to step down following the popular revolt against his regime. A few days later (November 21), the Hashemite monarch offered his support to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in a visit to the West Bank.

Incidents and protests against the Jordanian government continued, but with diminished resolve. The Islamic Action Front (IAF), the Muslim Brotherhood's party in Parliament, organized a rally in December and tried to occupy the PM's office. For the first time loyalists clashed with islamists, with the latter trying, just like in Egypt, to claim the leadership of the people's unhappiness and their demands for reform.

Protests also decreased following the King's support to the Syrian people against the Alawite regime and to the Palestinian struggle in the attempt of re-opening a dialogue with Israel (in January 2012 the first meeting between the Israeli envoy Yitzhak Molcho and his Palestinian counterpart Saeb Erekat took place in Amman under the aegis of United States, UN, Russia and the EU) have spared the Hashemite kingdom the traditional arguments used by the Muslim Brotherhood against other

tyrants in the region. Furthermore, it should not be underestimated that the Jordanian monarchy is a direct descendant of the Bani Hashem tribe to whom also Prophet Mohamed belonged.

In April 2012 PM Khasawneh stepped down and was replaced by Fayez Tarawneh (the fourth change at the head of the Executive in less than a year). The following month the “Independent Electoral Commission” began to prepare the elections. Initially expected for the end of the year, the vote was postponed to January 2013 due to delays in the registration of voters.

The monarchy

King Hussein, who led Jordan from 1952 (after his father Talal abdicated) until his death in February 1999, incarnated his country's true soul. He was courageous, as his enemies knew, in times of peril, he led his people with charisma, he was feared and respected by his Palestinian or Middle Eastern counterparts through his mix of military boasting (he was a pilot who drove his own planes personally and loved acrobatic squadrons) and love for women (he was always accompanied by beautiful wives. Rumors claimed he would offer a golden Rolex to the hostesses he had had an affair with) both having a strong popular impact. King Hussein was more of a military chief than a politician as some of his political and military mistakes prove: Jordan's involvement in the 1967 war with Israel when he lost the West Bank; his failed participation in the 1973 war that could have offered a bargaining chip; his initial support to Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War.

Nevertheless, Hussein always found a way out of the most intricate situations with skill and courage. On the internal front, whenever protests broke out for social and economic reasons, he was the only person capable of facing the Beduin chiefs and hostile tribes exerting all his authority (it should suffice to remember the “Bread revolt” in Ma'an in 1989).

King Hussein has ruled without the excesses of other absolute monarchies in the region. Political dissent was definitely opposed or marginalized, but without any ruthlessness. The General Intelligence Directorate (G.I.D. or Dairat al-Mukhabarat al-Ammah) that granted the regime's security was known for its efficiency, rather than for its cruelty. Before any resolute intervention dissidents would be admonished, dissuaded or even arrested. Only in September 1970 in his fight against the Palestinian Fedayn who put his reign at risk did Hussein show his ruthlessness.

His strength lay in the Arab Legion, an army composed of Beduins only, and in a personal guard of Circassians, descendants of those tribes from the Caucasus that had been chased out by the Russians at the end of the 18th century and had settled in the Ottoman Empire in Transjordan and later served the Hashemite dynasty.

King Hussein was also known for his generosity. He personally respected the Italian hospital in Amman where he was born. He was the one who adopted all the abandoned children that the nuns collected and fed. When news reached him that the Italian acrobatic squadron of the “Frece Tricolori” – whom he admired – had crashed and several pilots were killed, he was spotted crying in public. He was a personal friend of Amedeo Guillet, a general and later a diplomat who had fought the British undercover in Ethiopia during World War II with an army of Eritreans, Ethiopians and Yemenis that earned him the title of “Devil's lieutenant”. He could appreciate courage and grant honor to his enemies. The people could criticize his reign, but the man Hussein was widely respected.

As we've mentioned, King Hussein also had a complicated sentimental life. He married four times: his first wife was Egyptian (Sharifa Dina bin Abdulhamid) with whom he had a daughter, Alia, and from whom he divorced in 1956; the second wife was British (Avril Gardner), she gave birth to four children (Abdallah, Feysal, Aisha, Zein) before divorcing in 1971; the third wife was Palestinian (Alia Bahen bin Toukan), she died in an air crash in 1977 and gave birth to a boy (Ali) and a girl (Haya); his last wife was a Lebanese woman, Elizabeth Halaby, who converted to Islam and gave birth to four children (Hamzah, Hashem, Iman and Raiyah). Such a complex family line posed some problems in determining who could take over the throne.

The Jordanian Constitution states that the heir should be the first male son of an Arabic and muslim woman. Ali, son of the third wife, was the one. Born in 1975, he was too young to become king and during the 80's and 90's his role was taken over by Hussein's brother, Hassan.

Regardless of his lack of charisma and of the perplexity within the Royal Court, during the last stages of his fight against cancer King Hussein had designated his brother as his successor. But some of Hassan's premature moves whilst his brother was still alive convinced Hussein to rush back home and designate, the day before his death, his son Abdallah as his heir. Abdallah was the first male son, even though his mother was neither Arabic nor muslim.

These events posed some serious doubts on whether the Hashemite Kingdom could have withstood Hussein's death. With regard to several aspects, Abdallah is very similar to his late father: he is an helicopter pilot, parachutist, special forces freak, he is courageous and loves women. What was worrying was not his charisma, but his lack of political skills whom his father had refined during his reign and that his son had never tested. Question marks arose also on the role of the defenestrated uncle Hassan.

Until now, events have proven Abdallah capable of managing his reign with sufficient resolve and moderation thanks to the help of his wife of Palestinian origins.

Current challenges

Abdallah's skills in managing the Hashemite kingdom now face a series of external and internal challenges across the region and within his reign.

On the internal front, the challenge pertains the powers attributed to the king and what he will be willing to concede to his opponents. Following 2011's protests and clashes, Abdallah has set up two organisms: a Committee for National Dialogue (created on March 14 2011 and comprising politicians, journalists, activists and jurists and lead by a loyalist like Taher Masri) charged with drafting new electoral and party legislation and a Royal Commission for the Revision of the Constitution (created on April 27 2011). Both organisms have presented their proposals.

Regarding political parties and the electoral system, the new law grants a functioning multi-party system. Yet, parties cannot be based on ethnic, religious or racial criteria. They cannot operate inside the judiciary or the military and are banned from receiving financing from abroad. The State will fund their activities. Jordanians clearly fear Saudi, Iranian or Gulf money that could destabilize their social and political system. The reforms also grant the inviolability of party offices, of their

documents and communications.

Parliament was also modified and increased from 120 to 140 seats (123 elected at a district level, 17 elected nationally) with a quota for women (15 seats as opposed to 12 before the reform). At least theoretically, the new law provides more room for political representation and diminishes the royal action span. The truth is Abdallah was capable of blocking the aspirations of his most dangerous enemies, the IAF and the Muslim Brotherhood. Votes at a district level favor loyalist tribal candidates thus impeding the Brotherhood from piloting consensus at a national level where they are more influential.

Furthermore, the monarch has also introduced another element in his favor: the new law grants for the first time voting rights to the security forces who represent 10% of the population and who support the royal house.

The effectiveness of Abdallah's strategy was proven by IAF's boycott of the Parliamentary elections held on January 23 2013. Against the Muslim Brotherhood's expectations, there was a high voter turnout (56,6%, greater than in 2010 when the IAF participated). This was a checkmate to the Brotherhood's attempts to take over Jordan at a time when they rule over Egypt, they play a key role among the Palestinians (through Hamas) and could become the leader in Syria in the near future.

The Jordanian king now faces a Parliament full of conservatives and tribal chiefs. The islamists have 17 seats claimed by the "Muslim Center Party" (Hizb Al-Wasat Al-Islamiya), a splinter faction of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood has tried to foment the protests, but their show of strength has turned into a show of weakness. This does not mean the Islamic danger should be underestimated.

Constitutional reforms have also proven king Abdallah's political skills: grant with one hand and control with the other. Control is provided by a Constitutional Court (replacing the High Court for the interpretation of the Constitution) whose task is to verify the constitutionality of laws proposed by government or approved by Parliament. Yet, the 9 members of the Court, who run on a 6 years non-renewable mandate, are all appointed by the king.

Furthermore, Jordan's legislative system is bicameral. Senate is composed of 60 members, all appointed by the monarch. Every law has to be voted by both branches of Parliament and then ratified by the king. And this crucial procedure was not modified by the recent constitutional reforms.

On the external front, Jordan borders with Syria ravaged by civil war, Israel with its interventionist aspirations and a politically precarious and unstable Iraq. The country is socially and physically in contact with the Palestinian issue, while on the opposite bank of the Red Sea Mohamed Morsi's Egypt is still in turmoil. Iran's nuclear ambitions sparking fear in Tel Aviv and in the Gulf monarchies are not far. Plus radical Islam funded by Wahabis is getting hold of the entire region. Any of these issues could potentially put the stability of the Hashemite kingdom at risk. After all, Jordan is a small State dependent on international subsidies and Saudi oil sitting at the epicenter of a social, political and military storm whose outcome is unpredictable.

The most urging problem is Syria. Over 340,000 Syrian refugees are on Jordanian soil and the

conflict could spill over the border. There is a risk of terrorism and of Syria's chemical arsenal falling in the wrong hands. It is not perchance that Benjamin Netanyahu recently traveled to Amman to meet King Abdallah and discuss the issue. In early December 2012 Israel asked the authorization to violate Jordan's air space and strike Assad's chemical deposits. Abdallah's balanced approach to Syria is not appreciated by Qatar or Saudi Arabia. But there are 380 km of good reasons why the Hashemite kingdom wants to avoid danger. At the same time, Amman allows the US to train Syrian rebels in a secret base.

If the region is full of trouble, Jordan and its king play a crucial role in negotiations across the Middle East. And this is where king Abdallah's strength lies: his search for dialogue, his role as an intermediary between Israel (the peace treaty was signed in 1994) and the Arab world. Jordan is also traditionally in favor of the United States and its foreign policy, they are in good terms with almost all the regimes in the region and now that its internal turmoil is over it is an island of peace surrounded by sea storms.

Both nationally and internationally Abdallah has followed his father's footprints. Hussein calmed protests by replacing Prime Ministers and appearing to concede façade reforms. On the external front he talked to everyone, even with Israel when they were still the number one enemy of the Arab world. It seems that this approach still pays off.

Jordan's role in the region

Now that internal protests are over, Jordan has regained its role as a moderate and stable country in the Middle East. Hussein's legacy to Abdallah grants the Hashemite kingdom's survival because it allows Jordan to be the only credible interlocutor both for Israelis and Palestinians and for all those other crisis that erupt in the Middle East and in the Arabian peninsula.

Stability for Jordan has always come through a complex system of relationships. A small country without any desirable resources (apart from phosphates), surrounded by turbulent (Syria), bullying (Israel), unstable (Iraq) or religiously and financially dangerous countries (Saudi Arabia and its Wahabism and the historical rivalry between the Saud and the Hashemites) has been capable of refining its political skills and of overturning its geographical weakness into a role of indispensable negotiating partner.

On the internal front, the heterogeneous composition of its population split between Palestinians and Transjordanians has led to vulnerable situations in the past (like during the Black September when Palestinian militias were chased out by Hussein's Arab Legion). The issue is now apparently solved thanks to the dialogue between the ANP under Abu Mazen and king Abdullah. Time has also smoothed the differences between Beduins and Palestinians, with the latter considering Jordan not just a temporary hosting site, but their homeland.

THE WAR IN MALI: TERRORISM, CRIMINALITY, INDEPENDENTIST CLAIMS, NEO-COLONIALISM AND REVENGE

The French military operations in northern Mali have blocked a Jihadist offensive against Mali and have caused losses (although limited ones) to the Islamic militias in the region. Yet they have also provided political and practical opportunities to many of the parties involved, including the terrorists.

Who profits from the war

The main beneficiary is surely France, which emphasizes its hegemonic role, with a vague neo-colonial flavor, in a part of the world that was already under Paris' influence. It is the semantic composition “francafrique”, coined by the former Ivory Coast president Felix Houphouët Boigny, who postulated a close relationship between colonialists and their former colonies.

France's military intervention takes place in former French colonies providing a reason for the French army stationing in the region. It also provides president Hollande with the possibility of gaining popularity in France, where the “grandeur” factor of a now-dismantled but never forgotten empire always gives politicians the winning edge. Even though this untimely “grandeur” was later dimmed by the failure of the French special forces during the attempted liberation of a French secret agent in Somalia.

The other beneficiary of the war is Mali itself, both on a political and financial level. The coup d'état of lieutenant Amadou Haya Sanogo in March of last year had raised doubts, quite recurrent in Africa when pseudo-democracies fatally turn into dictatorships or when they are ulteriorly conditioned by military elites. The successive ousting by Sanogo of prime minister Sheykh Modibo Diarra on December 10 last year put a further strain on the credibility of the present Malian administration. The French attack, following an explicit request for international aid from the Malian President Dioncounda Traoré (put at the helm by Sanogo himself), legitimated the authorities of Bamako.

The irony of it all is that Sanogo carried out his coup d'état because – he claimed – the preceding president Amadou Toumani Touré had shown scarce determination in fighting the Tuareg rebellion. Now the French attack supports Sanogo's thesis and indirectly bestows upon him international credibility that he did not have in the past.

Then there is the economic aspect of it all, which in a poor country such as Mali has a great importance. The international interest that is now concentrated on Mali is bringer of financial benefits. International military contingents are moving in, there will be military bases, and the sovereignty of Bamako will surely be supported by further social initiatives. The UN has placed Bamako's requests in the fast lane and if the country becomes the epicenter of a war against Islamic terrorism in the region, it will surely mean rivers of money.

But what about Algeria? With the attack against Islamic rebels that had assaulted the oil fields in In Amenas on January 17th, Algeria stressed their refusal to negotiate with Islamic terrorism while placing the military “pouvoir” at the center of any internal political contrast (as has happened in Algeria since independence and since the fight against the F.I.S. Of Mdani).

The raid carried out by the Algerian security forces in In Amenas caused the death of several hostages, thus sending out a clear message: it makes no difference whether the victim is Algerian or European. There are no political alternatives in the fight against terror. The countries that have paid ransom money to save their fellow nationals (Italy is first in line) should be warned: there are no margins for flexibility. Form becomes substance in cases like this one. Algiers forgot to warn the countries whose fellow nationals were held hostages before they went ahead with the police operation.

Algeria thus underlines its decisional sovereignty, its determination in the fight against terror and sends a message out to French neo-colonialism (Algeria was a French colony too and gained its independence through the struggle against the French). Differently from the other former colonies in the Sahel, Algeria does not need to ask for help, to negotiate anything or to demand any authorization to proceed.

Yet there are other, collateral beneficiaries. One is the idea that terrorism, especially Islamic terrorism, has become a universal problem that has no geographical limits nor limits of reaction to it. This approach means that there exists no juridic or procedural limitations in fighting terror. France has landed directly on the terrain to fight the Islamic militias without the preventive go-ahead of the UN. The support of other countries came later, when the international community decided to uphold – in afterthought – the French army. This meant the creation of the juridical principle that when faced with terrorism, the rituals that generally accompany an international intervention are skipped altogether. It isn't the first time that the French act in this fashion, take the attack on Libya, decided by Sarkozy first, and then by the UN Security Council.

It must be noted that the French attack has legitimated - with such an upscale military deployment - the Islamic militias that for some time had controlled the north of Mali. Amidst the various configurations that these armed groups assumed in order to survive, and which gave them a negative connotation (banditry, drug trade, extortion, kidnappings and traffic of human beings), the sole credential that emerges now is the only one that could justify their criminal behavior: Islamic terrorism. Now people like Mokhtar Belmokhtar, Iyad ag Ghali (aka Abu al Fadl), Abdulhamid abu Zied, Yahya abu Hammam, Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou have gone from regular cut-throats to being the prototype of the holy war against the infidel.

Thus comes true, albeit casually, the dream of the emir Abdulmalek Droukdal whom, by transforming the Salafite Group for Preaching and Combat (in an anti-Algerian sauce) into Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), paces closely in the footsteps of Bin Laden. All of this happens despite the disaccord between Droukdal and Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Just like all of the other crisis regions in the world (Iraq, Libya, Siria, Somalia), northern Mali is swarmed by terrorism professionals who move from one conflict to the other without understanding the local reality and having blind, or “aveugle” as the Algerians say, nihilism as their sole doctrine.

The French military intervention has formed the basis for the creation of yet another area of confrontation between the West and the Islamic radical milieu. The war at hand is not solely for the re-appropriation by Bamako of the north of Mali, nor is it meant to oust criminal militias that hide behind a religious/terroristic facade. It becomes a clash of cultures, a clash of religions, a clash between neo-colonialism and independence and a clash between poor and rich nations.

Another winner, especially under the media point of view, is Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who from simple criminal and terrorist rose, thanks to the operation in In Amenas, to the top ranks of Al Qaida. He is an Algerian national from Ghardaia and has had previous experiences in Afghanistan, where he operated side-by-side with the Hezb al Islami headed by Gulbeddin Hekmatyar. After Afghanistan, Mokhtar returned to Algeria where he joined the GIA and the Salafite Group for Preaching and Combat, then he made the move to Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. He found funding through various illicit traffics and kidnappings and now has a pivotal role in the galaxy of Islamic terrorism. Not only has Mokhtar surpassed Droukdal in the merit hierarchy of Al Qaida in the region but he also won out over other armed factions that used to station in the desert of Mali and Niger: Abdulhamid Abu Zied's Katiba Tarek bin Zayad, Yad Ag Ghali's Ansar dine, Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou's Movement for Unity and the Jihad in Western Africa (MUJAO) and, last but not least, the Katiba al Furqan of Yahya abu Hammam (designated head of the Saharan region by emir Droukdal after the death of the emir Makhoulouf). His name ranks high in the Islamic terrorist hit parade, so much as to be included in the US "kill list". In other words, he could be ripe for receiving a guided missile shot by a drone soon.

Who loses

The main losers of the military escalation in the Sahel are the Tuareg that have been fighting for quite some time for their independence and culture (not only in Mali but also in Niger, Chad, Libya and Algeria). The Tuareg are now witnessing their aspirations and their plight being shadowed by Islamic terrorism. They have also been associated – and this is the worst aspect of it all – with terrorism. The Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) has been destitute – by the army – from any and all role in northern Mali, especially by Ansar Dine. The movement isn't able to fight for Tuareg claims anymore. The sole fact that it had operated in northern Mali, in areas that were controlled by Islamic militias and in contrast with the authorities of Bamako, had caused the Tuareg to be associated to international terrorism. Consequently, the legitimate claims of this nomadic people have been undermined.

Whether the MNLA is to become the mediator in Bamako for the Tuareg claims and whether it will chose to be sympathetic to the French operation or keep on fighting against the Malian army, the substance does not change: a strong feeling of rancor divides the Tuareg (and the populations of Arab origin, the Peuls of the north and the bambara in the south) from the rest of Mali's population.

There is also the problem of the perennial fight between non-Arab Africans and the Tuareg, between sedentary and nomadic populations, which is now producing the persecution of the defeated. The Tuareg, which altogether make up a population of over 5 million inhabitants, divided among the various countries in the Sahel, have suddenly become the main target of all those dictatorial or pseudo-democratic regimes in the region that need legitimation through nationalism and the instrumental use of an "enemy". For the 900.000 that live in northern Mali there are tough times ahead. The non-governmental organizations are not authorized to go into that region because of the war. This puts the community at the mercy of the abuses of the Malian army and of the black African population.

The other big loser is moderate Islam, the prevailing one in the sub-Saharan belt. This Sufism is not only distinguished by the 333 tombs of the Saints in Timbuktu, but it is also the bringer of a

religious culture impregnated with tolerance and open-mindedness that is now being surpassed by Salafite and radical Islam. It is an imported phenomenon which now emerges dangerously in various other areas of the African continent. This expansion of religious radicalism has virulent aspects in Somalia and Nigeria and more subtle ones in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia.

The over 400.000 refugees that escaped from the civil war also lost out. Of these, 45.000 are camping in Mauritania, 38.000 are in Niger and Burkina Faso, 52.000 in Guinea and others are stationed in Togo. They survive from international charity in catastrophic sanitary conditions and they don't know when and if they will be able to return to their homes. There are also other Malians that have left their homes but did not end up in the refugee camps. Overall, the number should be close to 700.000 people.

The origin of the new crisis

The military escalation in the north of Mali is the child of many fathers.

Firstly, the dissolution of Khadafi's regime has forced many armed mercenaries, who were fighting alongside Khadafi's troops, to flee towards the Sahel. These mercenaries were joined along the way by armed Libyans fleeing from the war. Since the areas where they traveled are ruled with weapons (and thus their rulers do not like to have armed foreigners visiting), the mercenaries and maverick Libyan fighters were forced to reposition themselves in areas where their weapons could provide them with a means of survival through crime. Their criminal acts have been instrumentally clothed in Jihadism and Tuareg claims. It is not just Libya, but the whole Arab Spring that has created situations of instability that have contributed to the resurgence of Islamic terrorism.

Another element that has favored crisis in the region is the commerce in arms that has gone from artisanal levels to industrial ones. The various national crisis' that have exploded in a domino effect in northern Africa have turned into an endemic destabilization. This happened because there were no more controls from central authorities, borders were not patrolled anymore, and the recourse to arms to settle legitimate and illegitimate claims grew exponentially. The Arab Spring has thus become Springtime for arms trafficking. Those who wanted arms or were thinking of using them did not meet with any difficulty in doing so.

As often is the case, alongside the arms with which ideas are prevaricated, there come interests of cultures that stem from a similar ideological base. This is the case of Saudi and Qatar Wahabism, which through the local crisis' tries to re-affirm the radical Salafite vision. It is a proven, almost mathematical fact that wherever Wahabism spreads, it becomes an element of expansion and adhesion to extremism and Islamic terrorism.

It is a tragic circumstance that first manifests with Osama bin Laden and that continues to manifest in other operative theaters such as Syria, Somalia and Egypt. The persuasive power of Wahabism lies in the money that accompanies its ideological expansion.

It is therefore clear that the paternity of the resurgence of terrorism in northern Mali lies in the money that circulates within that region. The money of the Wahabite Ulemas, the money deriving from various traffics, money from kidnappings, money from the drug trade that today sees Guinea Bissau as the destination for the cocaine of the Medellin cartel that transits through the Sahel and is

then moved to Europe. The various Islamic factions in northern Mali (AQIM, MUJAO, Ansar Dine) all have interests in this emerging business. They profit by ensuring a safe transit to the drugs through the areas they control.

It must be noted that the Tuareg tribes have always lived in poverty due to their exclusion by the central governments and due to the resourceless landscape they inhabit. Now this newly found wealth, although generated by criminal activity, brings direct and indirect wealth to the Tuareg as well. This circumstance has caused the Tuareg to be consentient with the various terrorist groups and their destructive aims.

An evolving situation

The French attack aimed at reconquering the north of Mali for authorities in Bamako and the Algerian offensive against the terrorists in In Amenas have raised a regional problem to the rank of international issues. It must be noted that terrorism is a surrogate form of war that cannot be stopped and dismantled through a military operation but rather tends to regenerate itself every time situations and conditions justify or favor such resurgence.

It is difficult to determine for sure when a war ends. In this specific case it is highly unlikely that the re-establishment of military control over the north of Mali could cause the effective end of terrorism in the region. The desert borders that separate Mali from Algeria (1400 km), Niger (800km) and Mauritania (2240km) are not sufficiently patrolled and this lets the terrorists move at their liking through secure bordering areas and countries. Since Mauritania doesn't have a sufficient capacity to contrast terrorism, Libya has other problems at hand (the 200.000 former rebels that don't want to disarm) and Niger is willing to take care of its Tuareg and not the Tuareg of other nations, the responsibility of fighting AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO rests inexorably on French and Algerian – if they are willing – shoulders. However, as we have seen, Paris did not tell Algiers about their imminent attack in Mali and Algiers did not call Paris about the operation in In Amenas. There clearly isn't any coordination between the two countries at this time. And a collaboration will be difficult in the near future because the relationship between Algeria and France is a mix of love and hate since the war of liberation. Yet it is clear that the country that is threatened most by Islamic terrorism in that region is without doubt Algeria and no efficient operation to fight this social plague could be successful without the consent of Algeria. This is the main reason why no nation, from France to the USA, has criticized the Algerian decisions. Algeria has not been touched by the Arab Spring and now it fears that this war against the Islamic militias in northern Mali could cause instability within its own borders.

Also, until the In Amenas operation, the Algerian authorities had treated terrorism in the south of the country with a subtlety typical of those who would accept a compromise with their counterpart as long as respective interests are not touched. This stems partly from the consideration that a 1400km border with Mali could be hard to control (if we consider all of Algeria's ground borders we get 6400km).

Recurrent voices from the past spoke of contacts between Toufiq Mediene's DRS (Departement du Reinsegnement et de la Securite') and the leader of Ansar Dine, Iyad Ag Ghali. Some even spoke of contacts with Mokhtar Belmokhtar himself.

Now Algerian authorities have deployed 10.000 men to check the border with Mali (the aforementioned 1400km) and with Libya (c.ca 1000km). These 10.000 men are supported by the armed border Police, Police helicopters and permanent air surveillance. Yet the size of the area to patrol makes this deployment insufficient, despite Algeria's mighty army of 150.000 men (the biggest in Africa) and an annual defense budget of about 10 billion dollars.

With terrorism moving to northern Mali, it automatically decreased in southern Algeria. This circumstance was seen positively by the Algerian authorities. Algeria's worries were mainly for their oil installations that are located principally in the south of the country and that represent the main financial resource of Algeria. The attack against In Amenas has brought an end to the silent armistice and has forced Algeria to act.

The In Amenas terrorist attack took place despite the strict surveillance and security measures enacted by authorities to protect the oil installations: in order to work at the installations, Algerians have to obtain an authorization from the Algerian secret services. A police department is detached to each installation to ensure external protection. Algerians cannot even travel to the south of the country without a special permit. Lastly, each oil corporation has an internal security apparatus with dedicated security personnel (although in In Amenas they were not armed). This shows how unprepared the Algerian authorities were in facing such an emergency and how efficient the terrorists were in occupying the installation with the presumable assistance of someone inside.

Then there is the approach that Algiers has always had with respect to terrorism: very little intelligence and a lot of shooting, a model that was confirmed by the In Amenas operation. Such intervention was often criticized by the Libyan security services in Khadafi's time when the two countries carried out joint anti-terrorism operations. In Amenas is a good example of this tendency not to negotiate. The terrorists were met with an exclusively military answer made of bombings and attacks. The elite teams that carry out these kind of operations are trained near the capital's airport. Their ranks have been trained by Italy in the past.

We have thus said that the terrorists ousted from Mali have been able to move to neighboring countries, yet we must keep in mind that other nations in the African continent are touched by Islamic terrorism, namely Nigeria with the Boko Haram and Somalia with Shabab. Although there is no territorial contiguity with AQIM as of yet, there is a possibility that this may happen in the future. Either way, the spreading of terrorists in neighboring countries exports the risk of instability. The outcome of the war led by France and the countries that supported operation "Serval" could not be calculated based on the forces in the field. If that were the only parameter there could have been but one victor. France deployed 3000 men on the ground (with support from many other bases on the African continent) and had an absolute air supremacy. They were supported by a 10.000 men-strong Malian army (although less than 1/5 of them were able to fight), by an African contingent that should count c.ca 5-6000 men among its ranks (from the ECOWAS countries – Nigeria, Togo, Niger, Burkina Faso, Benin and Ghana) and by Chad (c.ca 2000 men). US technical and intelligence support was provided through Africom from Djibuti and Maryland. Logistical support from European countries (especially from Germany and the UK) and Drones were also provided.

Facing this potent war machine, the katibah of the terrorists with an esteemed 4-5000 men: AQIM with about 2000, MUJA with a thousand, Ansar Dine with the rest of them. To these we must add the maverick terrorists that flock crisis areas when they explode. An army that lacks operative

coordination yet well armed by Libyan weapons and Qatar money, with some formidable connaisseurs of the desert among its ranks. And this is an asymmetric war, a non conventional one, where the strongest side doesn't necessarily win. The fact that the French intervention was not resolute is proven by the losses counted among the terrorists: 2-300 men. The others escaped in view of better times, when the French will have departed and the African contingent or the UN and the rickety Malian army will be left to control the territory. Meanwhile, being ousted from northern Mali, the terrorists have moved to neighboring countries, spreading conflict and instability.

African terrorism in general and the northern Malian terrorism in particular are the products of a mutated regional framework that has seen radical Islam prevail in several nations (see the hostile statements of Morsi against the French armed intervention) and by the instability produced by civil war. This means collusion and less supervision. It is generally in this context that the weakness of the State becomes a strength for endemic terrorism. It must be noted that the only nation in north Africa that is truly secular and impermeable to the spread of radical Islam (perhaps because of previous experiences with the FIS during the '90's) is Algeria. Algeria therefore became the designated target for those who dream of caliphates and the rigid application of the Sharia. Algeria was contrary to an international war against Khadafi because they thought - rightly so - that it would leave more room for terrorism. Algeria presently harbors the family of the toppled dictator.

Terrorism sticks where there is poverty, social injustice and limited expectations of a better life, liberty or democracy. Terrorism has a social role among the poorer masses. The adjective "Islamic" is to be considered a vehicle for these social currents, seen the absence of other ideologies after the fall of communism (in this particular area it was Panarabism and Baathism). The terrorist of the Malian katibah is not a bringer of ideological Islam, he just uses some of its most questionable social habits on the terrain. It is a kind of Islam that is pushed forth with the point of the dagger rather than with refined theology.

The only possibility to eradicate terrorism from northern Mali resides in an agreement between the Tuareg, who control the territory, and the central authorities, possibly mediated and subsidized internationally. This seems to be the strategy proposed by Washington, which seems to be interested in building a new military command (probably in Niger) to support Djibouti's Africom. The US has been planning such a move for some time but never managed to enact it due to Khadafi's hostility (according to the then-Rais the American presence in the Sahel would have attracted terrorists rather than repel them).

The French military intervention in Mali isn't motivated by the fight against terrorism or the preservation of Mali's integrity alone. The foreign policy of a country, when it is imposed with the use of arms, is always the product of national economic interests. In this case there are the uranium mines (presently presided by the French security services) that the French company AREVA have in Niger and which provide for 26% of Paris' uranium provisions (presently in Arlit and soon in Imouraren). Sources say that the radioactive element can be found in northern Mali as well. There are gold mines that make Mali the third gold producer in Africa, oil and bauxite fields. Enough to make the fight against Islamic terrorism in the Maghreb a very good investment.