

STRATEGIC SHIFTS AND THEIR IMPLICATION FOR MODERN SECURITY

Mihai-Ştefan Dinu, PhD

“Carol I” National Defence University, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

In terms of strategic developments on the international arena, recent years were characterized by a series of strategic changes: the Washington administration declared the US intention to shift its military effort towards the Asia-Pacific region, in order to further maintain its global strategic superiority. This intention was based on the perception of increasing Chinese military capabilities in the region, and economic ones at the global level; China continued to strengthen its economic position at the global level, simultaneously with the identification of new energy resources, Russia reformed its military forces and France reaffirmed its traditional position in Africa.

Key words: strategic shift; security; France; Russia; US; EU, resources competition, military power.

In the last thirty years global security has been transformed by a series of major events: the end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the USSR, terrorist attacks on the US in 2001 and the financial and economic crisis in the 2008-2010 period. Every major event lead to strategic shifts that fundamentally redrew the global political, economic and military map.

The term “*strategic shift*” is used in our paper in the sense of strategic changes needed to be made in order to achieve a certain vision, the strategic change being

defined as an alteration in an actor's alignment with its external environment¹, without affecting its national strategic interest.

Starting from the theoretical state concept we could create the layout of relationships amidst sovereignty, the core values of national identity and national interest. The schematic layout is illustrated in *figure no. 1*; its conceptual core being extracted from the fundamentals of the general theory of law and public international law, adding elements of the relationship created between the security, strategy, and geopolitics.

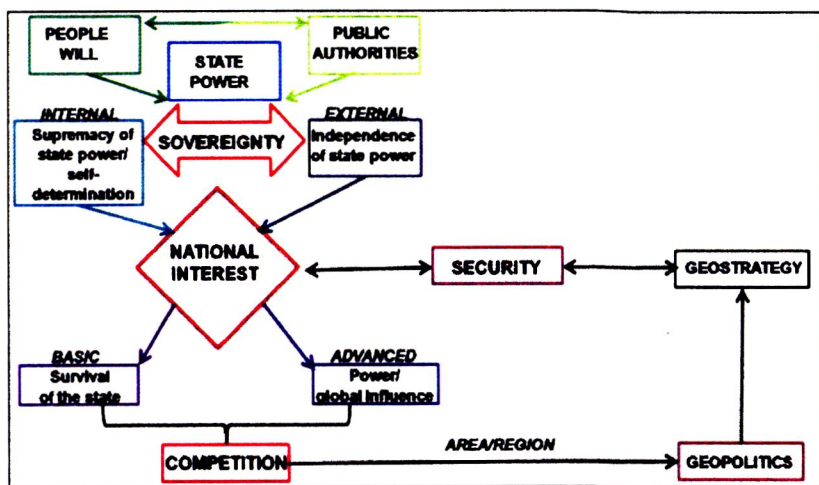


Figure 1. Relations amidst state power, strategy, national interest and security²

Following the logic of the schematic layout any strategy for national security of the state must be related to the desired role to play in the modern world. This way, in order to protect its interests at home, any state must project its influence abroad. Thus, it is required of the economy of that state to be able to compete with the strongest regional or global economies. However, the protection of national

1 Rajagopalan N. and Spretzer G.M, "Toward a theory of strategic change: a multi-lens perspective and integrative framework", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 22, No.1, pp.48-79., 1996, Van De Ven A. H & Poole M. S. (1995), "Explaining Development and Change in Organizations", *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 510-540. 1995.

2 Design by the author from a concept adapted from Nicolae Popa, Mihail Constantin Eremia, Dragnea Daniel Mihai, *Teoria generala a dreptului*, Editura C.H. Beck, București, 2005.

interest by projecting influence abroad must be extended beyond the realm of economic activities, enforcing it with the military means.

A major role in achieving every state strategic interest is the grand strategy, perceived as the relation of means to large ends, where the large ends can be represented by the long term security of some state or nation etc. Since Clausewitz, the definition of strategy has been formulated in various ways, every time as a strict image of the author's contemporary realities. Thus, whereas Clausewitz saw strategy as the employment of battles to gain the end of war, Liddell Hart proposed a slightly different approach, considering strategy as being the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy.

Considering the Liddell Hart approach as a one that serves the purpose of our paper, we will focus our analysis on the strategic shift which emerged after the financial and economic crisis. In the context of the situation created by the crisis, major international state actors concentrate their efforts in order to gain access to or to consolidate their position in regions that have large energy resources. Thus, the main strategic events took place in regions of North Africa and the Middle East, but we believe that they are part of a broader strategic influence expansion of the great powers in order to provide control over the Caucasus region, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa; regions which contain most of the world's energy reserves and, moreover, host the terrestrial and marine transport routes needed to reach their consumers. It is easy to see that those regions that correspond to the strategic areas that, back in the year 1904, Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman called Heartland (*Figure no. 2*).

Considering the above logic and theories, we think that the strategic evolution of the main international actors was developed in order to enlarge their spheres of influence so as to achieve and maintain control in regions hosting the greatest energy reserves, most of them being located in Asia.

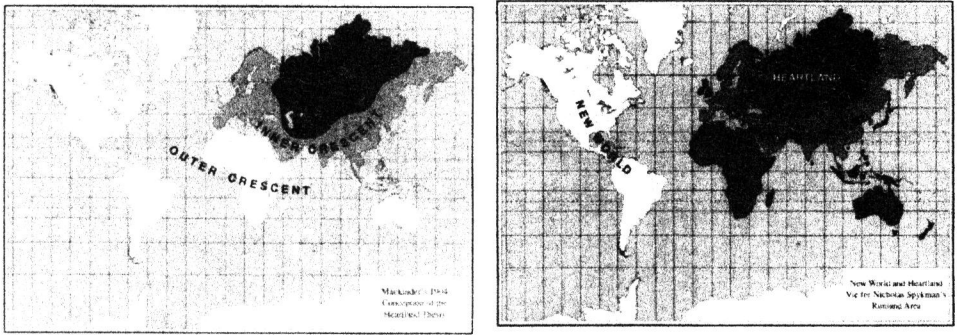


Figure 2. Graphical representation of the theories of Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman

Strategic Shift Impulse(s)

Prior to the current financial and economic crisis there was strong evidence that the global landscape of political and financial structures, dominated by United States and Europe, was about to change. Asia recorded an economic resurgence and cumulative financial strengths succeeding in overshadowing the US and Europe in terms of economic and financial strength.

Aware of this economic global shift to Asia and considering the rise of Russia and China, beyond the economic issues, as military powers in the region, the US decided at the beginning of 2012 to direct a strategic pivot position to the Asia-Pacific by relocating its forces from Europe and reducing ones in the Middle East. The U.S. planned to transfer its major strategic effort from the Atlantic to the Pacific on the basis of the strengthened positions of China and Russia in the region; a China which has been continuing its race to accumulate energy resources, while in the mean time transforming its army and military equipment. Simultaneously Russia, based on financial resources gained from the exploitation of natural energy resources and rare metal provided by its national territory, has been strengthening its dominant position compared to both the European countries and to US.

Most of the international relations scholars agreed that the US decision was of great importance for the international security environment, with implications ranging from Africa to Japan.

We consider that US major strategic shift was preceded by a prior series of strategic changes, namely: *the rise of Russia and the transformation of its military forces; the rise of China and its extended influence in Africa; and the Arab Spring, Libyan war and the position of France and NATO with the background of financial and economic crisis.*

Russia – economic and military reforms through energy leverages

NATO enlargement towards the East was perceived by Russia as an attempt to weaken its dominant position in Eurasia, which led to a strengthening of its relations with former Soviet states by creating regional collaboration instruments that attracted other regional powers, like China and India. In the last decade, backed up by its vast energetic resources, Russia's dominant position has been strengthened by military cooperation initiatives in the Central Asia region, mainly to counterbalance NATO enlargement towards a region placed in Russia's traditional area of influence. Transformation of the security environment and the need to adapt its responses to new threats lead to the necessity to reform the Russian Armed forces. Thus, issuing its Military Strategy in 2010, Russia accelerated the reform process. With an extensive military experience inherited from the Cold War Era, Russia still possesses a significant amount of forces and military equipment.

The armed forces reform process will not aim only at quantitative transformation, at the size level, but at a qualitative, structural one, matching the traits of the contemporaneous security environment. The armed forces will be resized to the amount of 1 million, an NCO professional corps will be created and the control and command system will be improved³. The Russian army will move from the military district-division-company structure to the military district-brigade-company; there are two reasons standing behind this decision:

3 ***, Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 15 October 2008.

- necessity to improve the response to the new security environment challenges, under former circumstances a division was too large a unit, hardly suited to contemporary armed conflicts;
- the optimization of command and control system through the avoidance of the redundant elements.

Implementing this plan of reform in a period of global economic crisis was considered rather hazardous when we have in mind the fact that, prior to crisis period, the trends of Russian military spending, compared with the US military spending were decreasing. It seems that Russia relies though on its energy resources, which translated into financial resources, which, in turn, could provide the necessary amount in order to modernize its army.

The reformation plan seemed to be a larger one, Russian authorities recently expressing their expectation to become one of the top five military forces of the world. In this respect, 70% of the military equipment will be replaced with modern equipment by the year 2020. Statements on military modernization projects also indicate increased efforts in order to develop strategic forces, the fabrication of new nuclear strategic weapons and 100 ships for the navy.⁴ According to the same sources, Russia wants to purchase military equipment produced by NATO Member States, for the first time in its recent history: French Mistral helicopters, amphibious class assault ships and 5th generation PAK-FA combat aircraft, also produced by France.

The issue regarding the modernization of nuclear strategic forces⁵ is grounded on two main reasons: on the one hand it is the emplacements of the missile defense system in Europe which are located in close proximity to Russia's borders, and on the other hand, a compulsory stage in meeting the *New-START* treaty on reducing nuclear weapons, signed with the US. According to the treaty, Russia's nuclear strategic forces have to be reduced by one third.

As previously mentioned, NATO enlargement towards the East in conjunction with the US intention to place missile defense system elements on the territory of

⁴ Ria Novosti, <http://rt.com/news/military-budget-russia-2020>.

⁵ *Russia to invest \$100 bln in defense industry until 2020*, Ria Novosti, 21 March 2011.

NATO Member States in Europe, has prompted a more vigorous Russian foreign policy and the development of its own missile defense system.

Although the NATO Summit in Lisbon led to reconciliation between NATO and Russia⁶ (improving US and Russia relations), some disagreements were revealed, especially on the missile defense system issue. Despite the Russian proposition to establish a common NATO-Russia missile defense system, the participants becoming equal partners, after the Honolulu meeting on 12 November 2011, Dmitry Medvedev announced that US and Russia have different views on the missile defense issue. Moreover, during a meeting with the officers from South Military District, which took place in Vladikavkaz, the former Russian president stated that the reaction to the placing of a missile defense system in Europe will be reasonable and sufficient without blocking the dialogue with NATO. Thus, Dmitry Medvedev considered that Russia is preparing to answer in two ways: military and diplomatic. Russia could take military measures such as: the establishment of a radar station in the Kaliningrad Region, locating offensive missiles in the western and eastern side of the country, while improving the security of nuclear facilities. As to the diplomatic way, Russia could adopt cooperation and further negotiations on the missile defense issue, which basically means to cooperate with NATO Member States, or to refuse further development in reducing disarmament and to benefit from its right of withdrawal from the START treaty. Russia's withdrawal would mean the beginning of a new competition on ballistic missiles, placing the former Cold War combatant states into a new rearmament race.

The Rise of China

According to the Defense Strategic Guidance⁷, the rising of China as a regional power in East Asia has the potential to directly affect the U.S. economy and security,

6 *La Russie accepte le projet de bouclier antimissile à condition d'y participer vraiment*, <http://fr.euronews.net/2010/11/21/la-russie-accepte-le-projet-de-bouclier-antimissile-a-condition-d-y-participer>.

7 ***, *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defence*, Department of Defence, Washington D.C., 2012, p. 2.

especially due to China's growing military power, whose strategic intentions yet remain unclear and may cause tensions both regionally and internationally.

To these programmatic issues cited from U.S. defense documents, we must add the military prestige ones, referring to China's military capabilities. Those issues could have been identified in 2011, at the beginning of the Libyan war, when China proved the advanced level of its military capabilities, as was the case with the withdrawing of Chinese citizens from the conflict area, using expeditionary operational capability involving a IL-76 aircraft. The IL-76 route, with the starting point at Diwopu International Airport in Urumqi (northwest of China) and destination point at Sabha (central-eastern part of Libya), an estimated distance between them of 9500-10500 km⁸, was possible by refueling once on its way to Libya and two times returning to China.

Moreover, the extraction of Chinese citizens from Libya by air was accompanied by another premiere, in the maritime sector, when a Xuzhou missile frigate transited the Suez Canal from the Gulf of Aden (where was it assigned to conduct anti-piracy missions) to Tripoli, (Libya), covering a distance of more than 4500 km with about 2/3 of the supplied⁹ fuel. Besides demonstrating that the authorities in Beijing are concerned about the fate of their overseas citizens threatened by the security crisis, China managed to gain political and military prestige, especially since now Chinese naval forces poses an aircraft carrier, a fact that may worry neighbouring countries like Japan regarding China's shipbuilding capacity, and therefore rising more concerns.

In this context, the U.S. intension to move its strategic efforts to the Asia-Pacific region is more than justified, especially since China's neighbouring countries¹⁰ in the South China Sea have expressed their concerns about the expanding Chinese

8 Andrew S. Erickson and Gabriel B. Collins, *The PLA Air Force's First Overseas Operational Deployment: Analysis of China's decision to deploy IL-76 transport aircraft to Libya*, China SignPost No.27, 2011, pp.1-2, la www.chinasignpost.com.

9 Andrew S. Erickson and Gabriel B. Collins, *Missile Frigate Xuzhou Transits Suez Canal, to Arrive off Libya ~Wednesday 2 March: China's first operational deployment to Mediterranean addresses Libya's evolving security situation*, China SignPost No.26, 2011, pp.2-3, la www.chinasignpost.com.

10 Bernhard Zand, *Stronger Chinese Navy Worries Neighbors and US*, Der Spiegel, 14.09.2012, la www.spiegel.de/international/world/strengthening-of-chinese-navy-sparks-worries-in-region-and-beyond-a-855622.html.

influence in the region on the connected with significant hydrocarbons reserves under the sea floor.

In the search for massive natural resources, China has increased trade with African countries, reaching in 2008 to a figure of \$ 10 billion, becoming the second trade partner after the US. Two thirds of China’s imports from Africa consist of oil, and the main suppliers are Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Sudan.

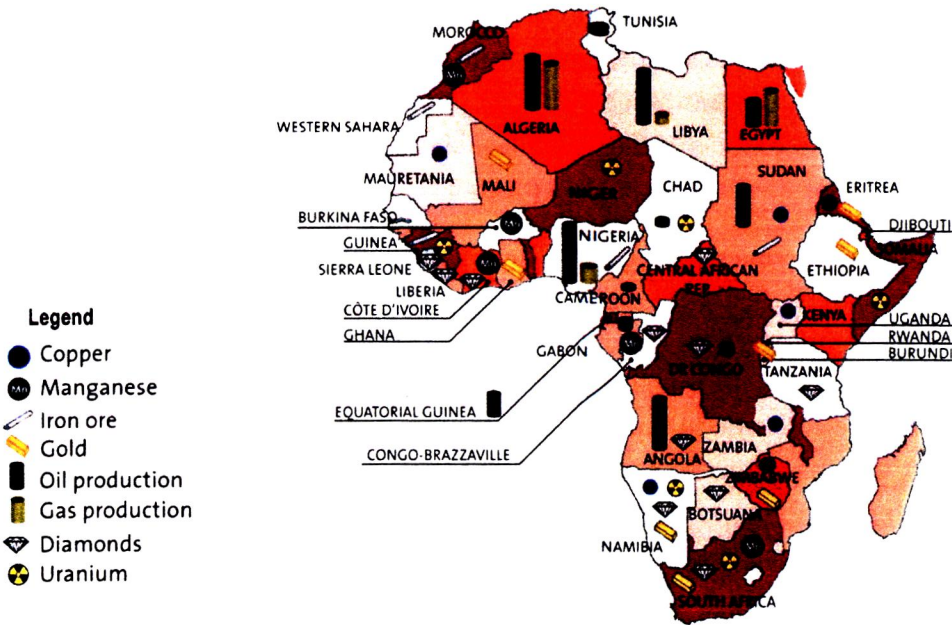


Figure 3. African continent’s natural resources¹¹

In exchange for energy and raw materials China provides assistance, trade agreements, the construction of critical infrastructure such as roads, railways and power plants. All this has made China an attractive partner for many African governments.

11 ***, *Strategic Trends 2010*, http://sta.ethz.ch/var/plain_site/storage/images/graphics/africa-s-resource-wealth-st-10/2345-5-eng-GB/Africa-s-resource-wealth-ST-10.jpg.

But China's actions have not passed unnoticed and have attracted the interest of other major powers like Japan and India which has resulted in the strengthening of the position of others on the continent, as in the case of the U.S. which showed that, similar with China, it is seeking to diversify energy sources to reduce dependence on the Middle East oil.

France and its interests in Africa

Viewed as a major event of 2011, the Arab Spring – as the series of popular revolts in North African and Middle Eastern states was generically named – benefited from world and regional state-actors' support, done in order to maintain a relative stability and not to further inflame an already tense situation that existed in these regions. While the US and NATO involvement may not have constituted a surprise in the case of Libyan military operations, for example, France on the other hand showed quite a pragmatic attitude. In this regard, France doubled its political statements with equal military efforts, its national contribution¹² to the international effort being surpassed only by those of the US. As resulted from the numerous analyses of the events, France's attitude was viewed as a surprise. A close look at the French defense papers, backed up by the fact that France is the most powerful economic and military state in the Mediterranean Area, an area in which by historical tradition, France exercised a certain control over the North and Central African states, benefiting from a large number of forces stationed in several countries on the African continent (Figure. no. 4).

Focusing on the economic and military dimensions, we must note that France is the second greatest European economic power, after Germany, and the fifth one at a global level. Moreover, France is the biggest and most powerful military force in EU and from the perspective of military expenditure; it is placed on the third place at a global level, as well as in the nuclear power where it stands after USA and Russia.

12 Daniel MÖCKLI, *Impartial and Stuck: NATO's Predicament in Libya*, CSS Analysis in Security Policy no. 91, Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich, April 2011, p. 3.

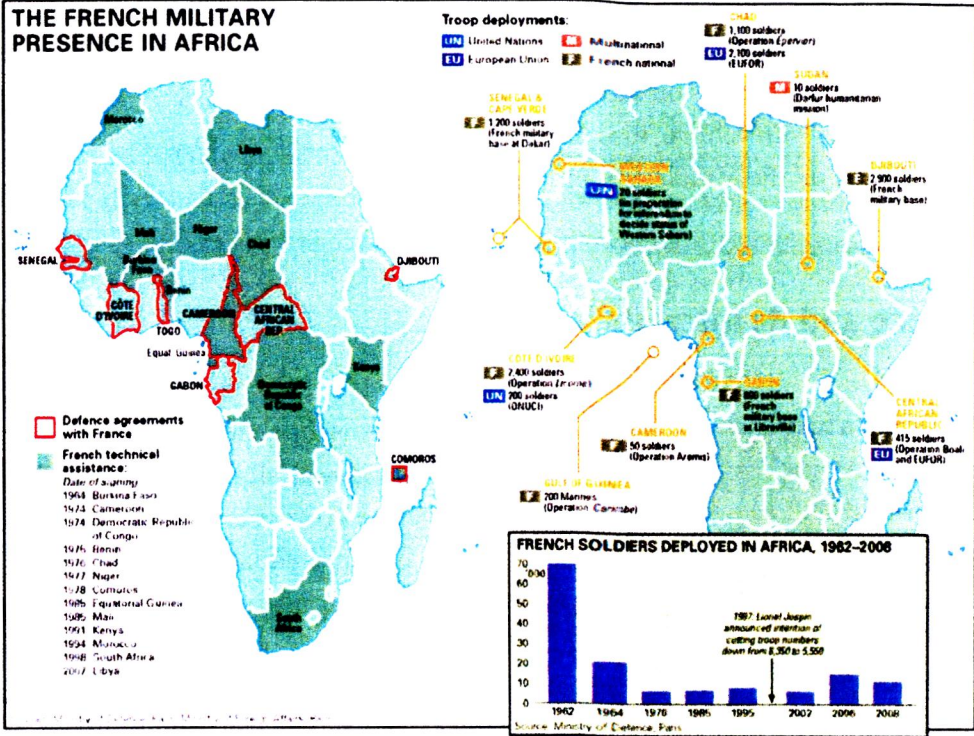


Figure 4. French military forces in Africa

As previously noted, most of the observers considered that France's involvement in the Libyan military operations was an opportunistic act. Despite these considerations, we believe that France has consistently pursued its national interests. This fact can be supported by the French White Paper on Defense and National Security, issued by the French government in 2008. According to it, there are four interest areas for France's security. We elaborate here on some of these regions' traits:

1. *The Arc of Crisis*, lies from the Atlantic to the Sea of Oman and Indian Ocean, from where France could expand its presence in Asia (and consequently to energy resources). In terms of stability and security, the area is characterized by some fields of concern, such as:

- resurgence of radical Islam;
- Sunni and Shi tensions;

- Kurd population;
 - fragility of political regimes in the area
2. ***Sub-Saharan Africa***, a region characterized by:
- the abundance of strategic minerals and energy resources that need to be exploited;
 - population growth;
 - weakness of state structures;
 - poor governance;
 - migratory waves caused by economic and social tensions;
 - endemic wars (domestic and regional - Somalia, Congo, Darfur, etc..)
3. ***European continent and the relationship of European States with Russia*** are major priority issues for France. Russia and its policy on neighboring states, especially the former Soviet Union Member States remains a major European security issue, as well as the partnerships developed with other European states or with NATO.
4. ***North Africa, important for France for historical reasons*** (language, energy cooperation and economy) is already a competition arena for states like the US and China or terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda. The region is characterized by various risks: social inequalities, high unemployment rates, unequal development of the region, poor educational systems, increased illegal immigration, and high exposure to migrant's transit from sub-Saharan African region, social tensions and terrorism.

All previously mentioned regions are considered critical by France, because of their immediate vicinity to Mediterranean Area, the main argument being that Mediterranean security is in close relation¹³ to European security. It is, in this way, that the main strategic axis¹⁴ of French security is highlighted, an axis exposed to great risks (*Figure no. 5*), as it crosses the regions from the Atlantic to the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean. Moreover, these regions are the beneficiaries of several EU cooperation programs, as depicted in *Figure no. 6*.

13 *Defense et Securite nationale*, Le livre Blanc, Editura Odile Jacob/La documentation Francaise, Paris, 2008, p. 45.

14 *Ibidem*, p. 75.

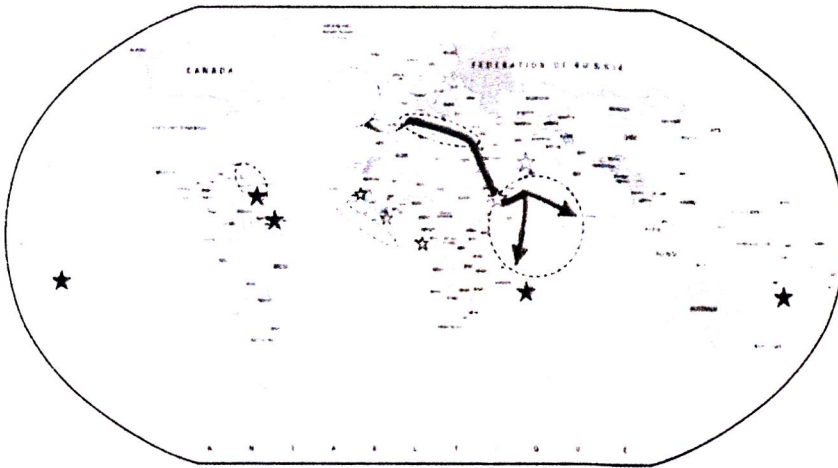


Figure 5. Main French strategic axis: from Atlantic to Indian Ocean¹⁵



Figure 6. EU Cooperation programs¹⁶

15 Ibidem.

16 Laura Canali, Balcans Special Issue - 10/ 2005, Limes, <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes-heartland/eu-programs>.

It is not difficult to observe the fact that the European Neighborhood Policy program is outlined within the territory of North African states, states that recently were hosts of significant popular unrest. Development of the European Neighborhood Policy program could be a guarantee for future stability of the region, allowing France to extend its influence on the African continent as a partner or rival of the USA and/or China in their race for energy resources. In this regard, the best instrument for France could be the Mediterranean Union, project which was presented in 2008 by the former French president Nicholas Sarkozy. However, implementing this instrument requires a significant financial effort that, with the current European shortage on budgets, seems to be rather difficult.

Another argument for reconsidering the strategic position of France is represented, in our opinion, by the strengthening of its presence in Africa or in its proximity, in the direction of its strategic axis. In this respect, we believe that a good example is that of the French territory which was extended by the administrative incorporation of Mayotte Island within the metropolitan French territory.

In terms of maritime competition in the Indian Ocean, Mayotte Island is a strategic place for France, the island being located halfway between Madagascar and Africa, providing this quick access to the mainland and in the meantime direct access to the Indian Ocean energy resource transport routes. The establishment of military facilities in this location is very probable, the economic potential of the island being very low. One fifth of the population lives below the poverty line and the unemployment rate is 25%. A former sultanate, colonized by France in 1841, Mayotte has a majority Muslim population, a fact that only increase the percentage of the Muslim population in a state like France, where the authorities are trying to limit cultural differences through policies prohibiting religious symbols in public.

Considering the already mentioned issues in the context of the 2011 events, and adding, the French military support in the Mali conflict earlier this year, we may conclude that, through its actions, France wants to overcome the status of regional power, engaging, as a partner or a rival of the global great powers, in the competition for energy resources.

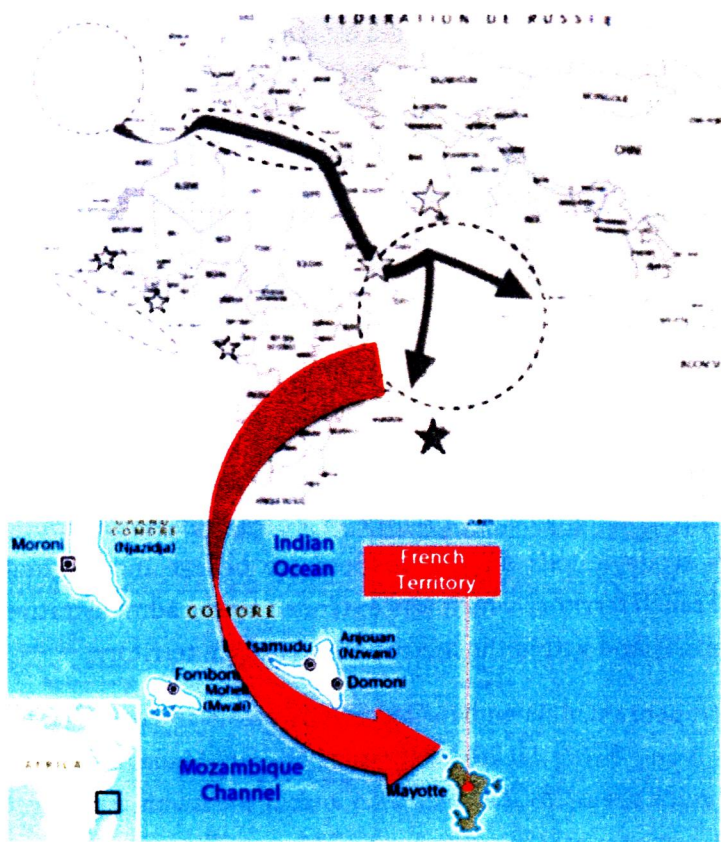


Figure 7. Mayotte Island location in Indian Ocean, near its main strategic axis

NATO and the Smart Defence Initiative

Based on the contemporary strategic trends, the cost of Libya operations and the spectrum of an intervention in the Syrian civil war, and adding the European countries defence budgets cuts, NATO has released the Smart Defence initiative.

Although the phrase “*smart defence*” was first advanced by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Munich Security Conference on 2011, in his speech about the need for new approaches to “*ensure greater security at a lower cost by joint efforts and higher flexibility*”¹⁷, the Smart Defence initiative was

¹⁷ <http://natolibguides.info/smartdefence>.

officially launched a year later, during a discussion that took place at the Chicago NATO Summit in May 2012.

Briefly, the initiative can be defined as NATO's response to the challenge of equitable sharing related to defence responsibilities in a time of financial austerity and national budget cuts due to the severe financial crisis. In these circumstances it is necessary to balance defence spending efforts between the U.S. and European countries on the one hand, and reduce the technological gap between U.S. and allied European states by the development of critical NATO operations capabilities by the latter ones, on the other hand. However, in order to achieve this goal, as the NATO Secretary General said in the above mentioned presentation, European countries must demonstrate political unity and determination in order to ensure the proper investment framework. Otherwise, Europe will only confirm the political differences which keep it on a less strong position, far away from the U.S.¹⁸.

In this regard, European countries should take advantage of the *Pooling & Sharing* program¹⁹ – a program developed in the defence sector by the European Union states – in order to design, build and share the necessary capabilities and use the institutional NATO framework as the best tool for capitalizing allies' knowledge to identify the states that have similar defence needs but lack the needed resources to achieve full independent capabilities to successfully conduct NATO operations.

Although it brings a new spirit to the transatlantic cooperation, the Smart Defence initiative must face the challenges that rise from its implementation at NATO level. In this respect new tools must be developed in order to respond to the basic imperatives of the implementation of Smart Defence namely the financial, operational, commercial, industrial and legal ones.

The success of transatlantic cooperation is, in this regard, directly related to the synchronization of the North American defence market with the European defence market. If the North American market means, essentially, the U.S. and Canada, the European defence industry is mainly concentrated in six countries, namely

18 ***, Anders Fog Rasmussen, NATO Secretary General, Calls for 'Smart Defence' at Munich Conference, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_70327.htm.

19 Cristina Bogzeanu, NATO - EU Relation from the Perspective of the Implications of "Smart Defence" and "Pooling and Sharing" Concepts, Strategic Impact, no. 3/2012, "Carol I" NDU Printing House, 2012, pp. 33-40.

France, UK, Germany, Sweden, Italy and Spain. In this situation, the emergence of a transatlantic framework for cooperation in the defence industry, to regulate military equipment manufacturing activities in both the U.S. and Europe, is more than expected.

In this respect, we think that a significant role in the design of transatlantic defence cooperation will be played by the European Defence Agency, also known as EDA. EDA activity has been designed to support the development of European defence capabilities by strengthening the European cooperation forms, both in the production and marketing of military equipment, as well as the development of scientific research and technological platforms.

If in the first years of its existence the EDA got the exclusive responsibility of launching various capabilities projects, the last period recorded a rebalancing of the Member States role. The EDA approach aimed to initiate programs based on priorities that were more or less defined by consulting the Member States, based on a complicated algorithm aiming rather at the quantitative evaluation of the capabilities deficit.

Thus, by engaging *the* European Defence Research & Technology (EDRT²⁰), there was accomplished a prioritization of technologies that requires investment from the Member States. In the spirit of the “*comprehensive approach*” promoted by the EDA, EDRT also covers the aspects related to the modalities to achieve European forms of cooperation, aiming to support the capabilities development.

The tools already created under the EDA institutional framework will provide a solid basis for the implementation of the NATO Smart Defence initiative, with the broad involvement of North American partners, and in an equitable regulated framework regarding the defence industry of all Member States. Romania also could contribute to a possible European consortium that is expected to be designed in the defence industry sector while exploiting the opportunities created to become eligible for specific contracts.

Our last statement relies on the fact that the Romanian national defence industry has been and continues to be a supplier of arms and ammunition on several

20 www.eda.europa.eu.

foreign markets. We think that the defence industry has the further potential to increase its export contracts, knowing that there are requests from traditional partners in arms exporting. In this regard we also think that support is needed in order to implement a series of technical and marketing measures, which, under the new regulations imposed by the implementation of Smart Defence, would attract strong Western support that would lead to the increased significance of the Romanian national defence industrial entities in the framework of programs for building, testing and acquiring share capabilities with Alliance partners.

In our perspective, Smart Defence is a pragmatic initiative whose goals are manifold:

- boosting the European *Pooling & Sharing* program that involves cooperation in the defence sector;
- reduces the defence costs for states involved, while ensuring the necessary capabilities;
- will support technological progress through research and development programs
- will create a competitive market for defence equipment
- will create financial, commercial, industrial, legal and operational instruments in order to equitably regulate the transatlantic defence market
- the emergence of a common defence market, based on the transatlantic relationship, will be a counterweight to the already traditional relationship between Russian and Chinese defence industries.

Although the positive consequences of implementing the Smart Defence initiative are numerous, there are some issues that can delay the implementation of the project. Among them are:

- the lowering the strategic flexibility through the specialization of capabilities among the allied Members;
- the possibility to achieve political unity of decisions for use at the multinational level concerning allied shared capabilities. To achieve the unity of decisions at the Member States level similar decision-making processes are required in each allied state, in other words the involved countries must have convergent national interests;
- the national governments tendencies to protect their own defence industry at the expense of allied partners, considering the fact that changes that will take

place in the defence market by creating consortia or by mergers of different companies could lead to the emergence of social costs (restructuring or downsizing the workforce, for example)

Conclusions

To sum up, the analysed strategic changes which in our view preceded the US strategic shift to the Asia-Pacific region could complicate an already complex security strategy. The US intention to transfer its efforts to the Pacific could lead to a security dilemma in the region, a region dominated by Russia, China and India, three great nuclear powers, not only in the region but at a global level. The nuclear capacity is doubled by the military transformation and economic advance, traits that could encourage an arms race in a region where there already exists tensions regarding North Korea could lead to an escalation of conflict.

At the same time, with the US efforts transferred towards the Asia-Pacific there will emerge a tendency for Asian or Eurasian powers to occupy the strategic and political space which results from the US strategic shift. In this sense it is interesting to monitor Russia's actions in relation to the NATO enlargement on the one hand and the ones with China and other Eurasian states on the other so as to see the extent of Russia's initiative to establish a Eurasian Union.

Regarding NATO, the Alliance might be challenged by the US strategic shift, a major issue being whether the efforts of NATO's European members to pursue Smart Defence and NATO Forces 2020 could close the gap between the US and European states in terms of military spending and deployment capabilities.

Concluding, the US strategic shift does not appear to bring a large scale alignment of the global balance of power, with the recent financial and economic crisis complicating the already complex competition for energy resources.

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