



Interview with Daniele Perra

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The worsening of the situation in the Middle East following Iranian General Soleimani's death and Trump and Netanyahu's presentation of the "Deal of Century" in Washington, demands we again speak of the events in the region. Far from wanting to leave the arena, the U.S. regime wants to remain a protagonist. The arena is complicated by the presence of several important actors, including Ankara, which, in my opinion, seems to be increasingly the tie-breaker, especially in Syria. Today, therefore, Mysterion offers you an interesting analysis of the framework and the possible development of the Middle Eastern chessboard, which Daniele Perra has kindly provided us. Perra is an expert in geopolitics and international relations who writes for important online publications including "Eurasia." I thank Daniele for his collaboration. Happy reading.

The year 2020 opened with two very important events that shook the world: the killing of General Soleimani, and the announcement by Tel Aviv and Washington of the "Deal of Century" or "Plan of the Century," which the U.S. and Israeli administrations presented as the definitive solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. What is happening in the Middle East? Is there a war against Iran on the way? Is there a link between the two events?

There is undoubtedly a link between the two events. It is known that Qassem Soleimani was

working undercover to set up mediation between Iran and the Gulf monarchies to arrive at least at a "non-aggression pact" among the countries of the region. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov had also suggested this solution at the time. By eliminating Soleimani, the United States eliminated the only person truly capable of carrying out such a mission. The Iraqi prime minister, in this regard, confirmed that Soleimani was in Baghdad in a "diplomatic capacity." This solution was naturally unwelcome to the United States because it would have reduced the pressure on Tehran and ruined what is the fundamental objective of the so-called "Deal of the century": to open to an "official" recognition of Israel by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in particular (collaboration through unofficial channels is already taking place). This would guarantee to further increase the pressure on Iran and establish a very strong counterweight to the possibility of strengthening an Iran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon axis.

Personally, I do not believe that the United States can pursue a "military route" towards Tehran. Washington does not seek direct confrontation. First of all, because the U.S. cannot afford it (in 19 years it has failed to achieve anything in Afghanistan; one can hardly imagine how an "invasion" of Iran would play out). This, in fact, would involve the deployment of an enormous military contingent in the region, great losses and a potential global crisis brought about by the possibility of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the possible destruction of numerous oil infrastructures. Secondly, because with the assassination of Soleimani they have already achieved what they wanted: the interruption of the aforementioned "negotiation." The fact that the Trump administration has repeatedly lied about the presence of wounded U.S. military personnel following the Iranian missile attacks against the Ayn al-Asad air base in Iraq is the most glaring demonstration of this. If the U.S. had immediately recognized the presence of wounded troops (or deaths, which there probably have been), it would have inevitably led to the need for a new military action.

Is the sanctions regime against Iran really isolating the country, particularly from partners like China (which is investing in the Ayatollahs' country because of its strategic position in the New Silk Roads project) or not? If so, to what extent? Is there a risk of regime change?

Surely the sanctions regime has caused serious damage to the Iranian economy. In this regard, it is good to remember that since the Peloponnese Wars, trade blockades and "sanctions," have been considered full-fledged conflicts, wars, to all intents and purposes. Therefore, we could say without hesitation that a war against Iran is already underway. At the moment, the main result Washington has obtained has been to undermine the (well-established) trade relations between the European Union and Iran and between Iran and India (one of the main importers of Iranian crude oil). India's position is interesting considering that there are particular ideological affinities (little analyzed) between the Zionist "rightwing," currently in power in Israel, and the Bharatiya Janata Party of Narendra Modi.

These affinities are leading to India's progressive abandonment of the North South Transport Corridor project (which was to connect India to Russia through Iran and Azerbaijan and provide a faster alternative to the Suez Canal) in favor of the Israeli infrastructure project known as the Trans-Arabian Corridor; this corridor goes through the Arabian Peninsula (another reason behind the phantom "Deal of the century"), and would open the gates of the Indian Ocean to Tel

Aviv. At the same time, Iran can still retain the support of Russia and China (even if some propaganda tries to undermine these relations); these two powers are well aware that, often and willfully, U.S. sanctions are also indirectly directed against them. The aggression against Iran, in fact, is an attack on the beating heart of Eurasia.

By attacking Iran (positioned at the intersection of the North-South and East-West axes of Eurasia), Washington attacks the entire project of integrating this vast continent, which Pentagon strategists perceive as an existential threat (as Nicholas Spykman teaches). The risk of regime change remains. Washington will hardly abandon that goal and will periodically try it again, using its extensive "fifth column" inside Iran. However, the Islamic Republic, in the course of its over 40 years of existence, has produced effective antibodies against what Jalal Al-e-Ahmad called gharbzadegi (West-induced intoxication)

What is the role played by Erdogan in the Middle East and which side is he on, given that he seems to play on opposing fronts? (Closure of the Black Sea to NATO ships, economic and political support to Ukraine, support to al-Sarraj in Libya etc.). Is it possible that the double game is fake and it's what the U.S. wanted?

Erdogan's role is extremely ambiguous. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has defined him as "the one who has had the greatest success in being a pawn in the hands of his American master." In fact, apart from the official rhetoric concentrated exclusively on the Kurdish question (and the alleged betrayal of their cause by Washington), the Turkish action in Syria, which has prolonged the war and continued the destabilization of the Levantine country to the bitter end, was immediately received with great favor by the Pentagon. Suffice it to say that Turkey, in Syria, continues to act under the umbrella of NATO, which guarantees the defense of its airspace through the deployment of several Patriot missile batteries along its borders. And, despite the fact that people perceive Ankara and Tel Aviv as being in open conflict, it is almost surprising how at every Syrian advance on the Idlib front, a new Israeli air attack on Syria acts as a counterweight. Certainly no one is exposing today the support that the West and Turkey have given to terrorist groups opposed to the legitimate government in Damascus.

The relationship Ankara has with Russia is less clear. In this case, increasingly evident and advanced commercial ties (for example, the development of the TurkStream project born to replace the South Stream openly boycotted by the United States) contradicts the conflict between the two countries in different theatres: from Syria to Ukraine, up to Libya (although the Libyan case deserves some clarifications). And we must also consider that, in addition to Erdogan's sub-imperialist pretensions, third party actors intervene to exacerbate hostilities in these different "theatres" in an attempt to quickly break the above-mentioned economic ties. Now, the agreements made in Sochi between Erdogan and Putin provided for the disarmament of terrorist groups active in the Idlib region. Turkey has not only failed to fulfil its obligations under the agreement, but has also continued to supply weapons to the Jihadist militia members (who are repeatedly targeting the Russian military in Syria at this very moment) and continues to consider the area as an integral part of Turkish territory. Turkish flags fly in Idlib and the streets are "decorated" with Erdogan's portraits. In fact, Erdogan is asking the Syrians to withdraw from Syria.

The Libyan scenario is much more complex. The agreement between Turkey and the Government National Accord in Tripoli on the delimitation of maritime borders cuts the eastern Mediterranean in two. This division in the short term does an indirect favor to Russia by quarantining the (U.S.-supported) Israeli-Greek-Cypriot project of the EastMed gas pipeline, which is designed to disconnect Europe from energy dependence on Russia. However, at the same time, the new Jihadi infiltration into Libya supported by Ankara is undermining the project to build a "Russian triangle" in the Eastern Mediterranean (theoretically including Libya, Egypt and Syria). This triangle aims at undermining the hegemony of the Washington-Riyadh-Tel Aviv axis and, in particular, the overwhelming power of the Washington-Riyadh duopoly in the oil market. So, if it is true that Ankara is looking for some autonomy within the Atlantic Alliance, it is equally true that most of the time its actions end up favoring NATO's own strategy. The same transfer of militiamen and mercenaries from Syria to Libya has an enormous destabilizing potential for the neighbouring countries and, above all, for the Sahel area: another geographical region in which France and the USA are trying to limit Sino-Russian penetration.

Is the war in Syria really over?

The war in Syria is by no means over. As I have had occasion to point out in some articles published in the geopolitical studies journal "Eurasia", the operation "Source of Peace" (the third Turkish military operation within the Syrian borders since the beginning of the conflict) has more or less indirectly also produced a new insurgency of the Islamic State in the border regions between Iraq and Syria and in the province of Deir Ezzor. This, furthermore, is another product of the assassination of Qassem Soleimani who, in the last few years, made the fight against the terrorist group his reason for living. And it is not surprising that such an insurgency occurred at the time when the Iraqi Parliament demanded that the occupying US American troops leave its territory.

We must also not forget the fact that the USA, despite the propaganda declarations of withdrawal, continue to occupy the North-East of Syria illegally, plundering the oil resources of the country. This occupation, in addition to the heavy sanctions imposed on Damascus, is a guarantee that there can in no way be an economic recovery such as to allow Syria to strengthen further and excessively. Among other things, as of 2023, Syria (with large Russian participation) should begin to extract gas from the fields along its shores. And I do not exclude in any way that there may be a new Turkish intervention to prevent this from happening.

There seems to be a strategic hotbed on the wall, dividing Europe and Russia, which forms a geographical belt from the Baltic republics, through Ukraine, the Balkans, to the Caucasus, Turkey and the Middle East. In these regions there are also important US-controlled military bases surrounding Russia. What motivates the growing turmoil in these regions?

The German geopolitologist Karl Haushofer was convinced that a sharing of intentions and borders between Germany and Russia (purely "[tellurocratic](#)" powers) would inevitably produce the crisis of the "[thalassoccratic](#)" system imposed by Great Britain at the time. With the end of the Second World War, the United States quickly replaced the United Kingdom in its role as a maritime power. And, like the British,

even after the collapse of the USSR, they continued to regard this possibility as a threat to their hegemony on the European continent.

The rapid expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe following the implosion of the socialist bloc and the violent transition from socialism to capitalism must be read in this sense. Romania, for example, situated along Europe's most important inland waterway diagonal (the Danube River), together with Bulgaria, was to play the role of guarantor of the land corridor between the northern and central European new entrances to the Atlantic alliance (Baltic States, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary) and its easternmost member: Turkey.

In short, an attempt has been made to create a real "cordon sanitaire" around Russia recently reinvigorated by the "Three Seas" initiative. This, studied by the Obama administration but completed under Trump, unites twelve countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria) along the vertical axis from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and the Adriatic Sea. The aim of this initiative is to reduce Russia's gas exports to Europe and to build terminals for the storage and distribution of liquefied gas from the USA. Therefore, we could safely say that the turmoil in these regions is caused by the desire to prevent an ever closer commercial link between Russia and Europe and, consequently, any potential development of a united Europe all the way to Vladivostok. The same can apply to the Middle East. The only strategy that can allow the United States to keep intact its "imperial over-extension" and some global hegemony (even in a multipolar context) is the ever valid divide and rule.

It seems to me that, in order to understand the geopolitical scenario, one cannot disregard Israel, at the top of the Western powers in my opinion. It seems that relations between Israel and Russia are excellent and yet Washington is fighting against Moscow. How do you explain this contradiction? Israel and the USA: who commands who?

Without full sovereignty over its own internal sea (the Mediterranean), Europe can never aspire to any form of real and complete sovereignty. In this sense, Israel, outpost of the "West" in the Near East, represents the "geopolitical" reason for the continuous presence in the Mediterranean of the U.S. Sixth Fleet. Israel, therefore, is the main obstacle to the European continent's real sovereignty over its internal maritime space. As far as the Russian-Israeli relationship is concerned, the scholar Youssef Hindi has pointed out that Tel Aviv, on the one hand, tries to maintain excellent diplomatic relations with Moscow and, on the other, constantly wages war against all Moscow's regional allies. Here, too, there is substantial ambiguity between the parties. It is a good premise that Moscow, beginning in the Soviet era, following the Stalinian miscalculations that led to the USSR aiding the Zionist cause in an erroneous attempt to counter Britain, has never been unbalanced on the possibility of a liberation of Palestine.

Today, the official position of Russia remains that of the USSR: that is, the creation of two states along the borders that existed prior to the 1967 conflict. However, there is a substantial difference from the past. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the immigration of Russian Jews to the "Jewish State" (once again largely financed by the USA and still in progress today) radically changed its ethnic constitution. Israel, at present, is a largely Russian-speaking country. This allows the Kremlin to think that, in the long run, through skillful

diplomatic-commercial penetration, it can succeed in eroding the link between Washington and Tel Aviv by bringing Israel to its side. This would imply for Russia new possibilities of action in a Mediterranean space where the US American presence would be perceived as no longer necessary. Needless to say, such a project is only feasible in an extremely long time and the powerful Zionist lobby in the U.S. institutions will hardly allow such a change.

How are Beijing and Moscow reacting to the growing tensions?

What Russia and China can do (and indeed are already doing) is to continue the process of integrating the Eurasian space. This process, however, must take place on two levels: one economic-commercial, based on de-dollarisation in bilateral trade and energy cooperation; and the other, more political, based on cooperation also in the military and on security issues in order to avoid, for example, the risks of new destabilisation and "balkanization" of the areas crossing the "New Silk Road". In other words, once again, they must try to progressively erode the spaces of action for the powers extraneous to the Eurasian continent also in terms of asymmetric warfare or the risk of new "colored revolutions." I can conclude with one prediction: the trade truce between the USA and China will only last a moment.

Daniele Perra collaborates actively with "Eurasia. Rivista di studi geopolitici" and its website since 2017. His analyses are mainly focused on the relationship between geopolitics, philosophy and history of religions. Graduated in Political Science and International Relations, in 2015 he obtained the Master's Degree in Middle Eastern Studies at ASERI - High School of Economics and International Relations of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan. In 2018 his essay "On the necessity of the Empire as a unitary geopolitical entity for Eurasia" was included in vol. VI of the "Quaderni della Sapienza" published by Irfan Edizioni. He collaborates assiduously with numerous Italian and foreign websites and has given several interviews to the Iranian Radio Irib. He is the author of the book "Essere e Rivoluzione. Ontologia heideggeriana e politica di liberazione" (Being and Revolution. Heideggerian ontology e politics of liberation), Preface by C. Mutti (NovaEuropa 2019).