

UNIVERSITY COOPERATION AND PROCESSES OF PEACE: NEW FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



Amb. Franco Mistretta – Presidency AESI

CHAPTER I: Geopolitics of crises, new challenges for foreign security and peace policy.

The *world order*, once a target striven by world actors such as governments leaders, military people, International Organizations, Think Tank's and Ngo's, does not exist any longer, owing to the disorder caused in several regions by the shortness of leadership and political unfitness to govern by most of the world leaders. Their actions, omissions and conducts in different fields, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, Environment, World Climate, Migration, have heavily contributed to disrupt geopolitics and people conditions, increasing social unrest and political instability, and rousing fear, concern and anxiety about the future. Globalization out of control and indiscriminate deregulation favoured wild financial speculation, enormous profits for a few along with salary's reduction, unemployment, widespread poverty, in all, the deepest social-economic crisis after October 1929! At the beginning, globalization alleviated poverty conditions, but didn't sow the seeds for a sustainable development in the poor parts of the world, and, in the long run, contributed to deteriorate the way of life of the developed societies middle class segments. In reaction, western democracies' electors chose to address populist and sovereignist candidates, thus transforming the same structure/nature of the democracy in power for the last 70 years, leading us to the brink of a painful goodbye to it, with a perspective of a sombre future. It is time to change this dramatic trend to prevent further prejudice, to reject populist attitude and to work for positive initiatives to cope with the above mentioned afflictions. Easy to say, difficult to accomplish: it is to the young generations that are unconditioned from prejudices or bad habits, to be positive and confident to be able to force their leaders to change attitude towards said harms, opening themselves to new solutions in tuning with the other world leaders.

Students and peacekeeping along with diplomacy, military forces and universities. Their role in contributing to the maintenance of peace and to the relief of the populations in the territories of crisis.

Even if the last extended war goes back to the 40's, local conflicts have been scattered in the following years in large part of the world, affecting civil populations, which are suffering a lot and more and more in need of assistance. Governments are not always able to grant it and they are welcoming the participation on the field of the "third sector", volunteerism, which has grown formidably in the last decades, becoming, next to military and diplomacy, an essential actor on the field. Thanks to its enthusiasm, empathy and generosity, these aid co-workers, coming from different segments of society, medicine, university, school, construction and others, brilliantly serve the purpose, becoming a pivotal instrument in the immediate post belligerency process, to heal and redevelop the environment towards a stable peace. Their intervention has become complex, requesting specific capabilities and adaptability to the field requirements; governments had run appropriate training courses to provide them with the right knowledge to better perform. On this respect, even if it's embarrassing to talk about oneself, I organized, as Director of the Diplomatic Institute, the school of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, several specific courses for humanitarian missions (including law's fundamentals, preventive and emergency medicine, tender for contracts, maintenance service and others). Trainers and leaders of the Ngo's attended them a great deal, replicating them at local level. And I did it thanks to the suggestion and impulse of the European Association of International Studies and of its President, Massimo Caneva. I cooperated also with the Universities, reaching an agreement with CRUI, the Italian Organization reassembling their Presidents, in order to give the possibility to graduated and final-year students to follow 3-6 months stages to Embassies, Consulates and Bureaus of the Foreign Ministry, to get close to the international activity.

What future for the Middle East?

Syria is actually threatening every goal of peace, ranging from containing/eliminating jihadism to solving refugees problems. Diplomatic opportunities are few and far: war is going on roughly six years now and there are no perspective of ending it, since Bashar al Assad's is well in command, thanks paradoxically to the divisions of his opponents: Islamist elements, supported by Saudi Arabia and Gulf monarchies that called all world Sunni for mercenaries (mostly from Al Qaeda) and Iran, and several groupuscles, among them the true insurgents who where longing for freedom and democracy. After six years of dreadful suffering and talks in deadlock, Russia has become the puppet-master of the military and political strategy, filling the vacuum left by US and EU' inertia in promoting positive steps to the peace process. USA has been conspicuous in these years for its political and physical absence from the region, not interested any more in oil, having become a big extractor of it at home. Iran has been for a long time accused of terrorism by both, Israel and US, in

spite of its active fight against Jihadist Sunni caliphate, fed by Waabi and UAE monarchies and of continuing to build its atomic potentiality. US must recognize that Russia is now the main power broker in Syria, having in its hands the future of the region: it supplies arms to belligerents of different sides, opposing systematically any UN's effort of ceasefire, preventing Turkey to extend its territory 20 miles into northeaster Syria and damaging Assad power, curbing Iran' appetites, not to worry Israel, always on the alert. The latter is confident of its long-time *de facto* agreement of non-belligerence with Assad's family, and shares Saudi Arabia Sunni hatred towards Shiite Iran. This one is now under diplomatic pressure by the President of the USA, who is accusing it of attacking some Qatar oil ships, threatening the free navigation through the Hormuz Straits. EU's above mentioned absence has *de facto* marginalized it from the area and lost credibility in such a region so crucial for its proximity, energy supplies and migration's fluxes. Arab States on their part have proved once more unable to reverse the spiral of incomprehension and conflict among themselves: they look more concerned with their longevity in power than in nation-building or region-building. With the exception of the United Arab Emirates, all attempts to regional integration or unity have failed. Actually time is ripe for the Arab States to shelve their differences, bury the hatchet of rivalry, and confront collectively old challenges and new perils. A reactivation of the Arab Maghreb Union and re-dynamization of the League of the Arab States seem long overdue. Should the Saudi-Iranian competition continue unabated, there will be huge loss of human lives and material resources with no winners, but Israel and Western and Eastern military industries. In addition to this tragedy, there is Libya, whose civil war is neglected by Europe, which still thinks that it is just a Franco-Italian bone of contention, ignoring that, on the contrary, it has become a conflict between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, on one side, and Turkey and Egypt on the other. Italy has well understood this, being the only country that has kept long time ties with Tripoli; but it has failed to propose a viable peace process. Libya has gradually drift towards Middle East after the fall of Gaddafi, owing to the disregard of France, Great Britain and USA, who bombed Tripoli without a strategy, abandoning the country's destiny to anarchy. Neither EU has been able to adopt a coherent line of action: still conspicuous for its unfitness to gather consensus on foreign policy: *de facto* it is supporting ambiguously, Al Serraj, who is discredited among the Kabila's, that control that part of the country; without disregarding General Haftar, equally unaccepted by those same local potentates. Nevertheless it's still up to the EU (and vital for its future), to find a way out to the present bloody deadlock, since it is the door of Africa, through which unwanted migration comes to the Continent but also trough which, in better times, it could offer a great opportunity of flourishing trade exchanges.

European Union and East Europe at a crossroad.

Unable to find internal cohesion in managing foreign policy, having watered down the role of its High Commissioner, (a ridiculous figure with a bombastic name), EU doesn't seem in better shape in coping with strong member State's objections to austerity and to the connected measures to handle budget deficits. Increasing local egoisms are contributing to the "disuniting" of the Union, whose citizens are striving for more self-government or even separatism, as Br-exit, Cataluna, Northern Italy, Corsica and others. Before dying, Jean Monnet revealed that, should he restart the European project, he had proceeded differently, beginning by policy and culture, not economy: an exasperated materialism has in fact fitted into our societies, crossing over values and principles, with a widespread financial speculation, destabilizing the weakest economies of the Continent. Unemployment, poverty and recession are feeding a dangerous subculture, causing resurfacing historical differences and egoisms among Northern, Southern and Eastern members. In particular the latter, self-assured by the fear of an imposing Russia, thanks to EU political shield and its generous financial help, are assuming ungrateful and selfish nationalistic attitudes, rejecting systematically Brussels recommendations and directives aiming to share economic and migration problems. This conflicting approach is irritating the other partners, creating an hostile atmosphere, with bad consequences to European capability to recover from this dramatic social-economic moment. Its citizens have strayed from its Institutions, accused to have distorted founding fathers' purposes, deceived their expectations to be involved in the housekeeping through subsidiarity by local governments. On the contrary Commission has taken too much more power to the detriment of member States, without the participation of the pluralities of identities that live together; who have turned pessimistic about their future, forgetting that EU has given the Continent peace and prosperity for the last 70 years along with an equitable redistribution of wealth, the largest in the world. Owing to globalization, money and finance have become pivotal in the production process, straining social instances, like labour, education, salary, culture, which have once been the core of real economy. European voters, and mostly the younger ones, went just massively to cast their vote to the European legislative elections, looking forward to change this trend. They want to master their destiny, without acquiescing pessimistically to the present distortions of the European scenario, confident that strong Commission and Parliament will overcome this long period of recession and moral depression. They want a more strategic Europe in our societies and its suburbs, with more vision, less bureaucracy and procedural technicalities. European world's role is now up to the newly elected Parliament and Commission to retake an active role in the management of the different dossiers, foreign policy included, or they will be blamed for their failure and our Union will fade to nothing more than a museum.

The migratory context and security

What gateway to overcome the dilemma between security and freedom in the migratory context?

Planetary challenges, such as climate change, economic recession, poverty, migration, are exacerbated, creating a growing demand for sovereignty on the part of several member States' people. Migration, in particular, both from Africa and other problematic regions, is going to expand considerably: by 2030 around 42% of Europe's Muslims will be under 30 years old, while the non-Muslim population is expected to be only 31%. Moreover a growing promiscuity among Arabs and Europeans, as a result of uncontrolled migration flown to Europe from South, is perceived as a threat to local people's workplace social and physical security. Europeans are responding with uneasiness, to say the least, to the influx of this new presence into everyday life: citizens are wary about seeing immigrants strain their already limited welfare-state resources, arguing that it is unfair for newcomers to have equal entitlement to state services and benefits without having contributed to building them up. They distrust the newcomers' capacity and willingness to accept social aspects of their way of life. It will take a long way to go for both to adapt each other. Aggressive nationalism is impeding the creation of space for dialogue and meeting for the new comers in a spirit of mutual respect. Willing politicians and Ngo's could and should work to find suitable solutions to receive them in sustainable numbers, in order to be able to offer them lodging, local language education, training to work according to local needs: this would be the best way to include them, to everyone welfare and satisfaction.

Mediterranean, (a sea in the middle of lands, according to Romans' denomination) has always been a crossroad of civilizations, trade, cultures, wars, able to condition the life of its coastal inhabitants. Now it is scene of conflict between Christianity and Islam: the former trying to export democracy and economic globalization, while the latter resisting to it, fearing a new colonization, a new submission to the rich West. Most of the Islam is suffering from globalization, as well as part of the Christian and world nations, which equally dislike its unsettling rhythms of life, morally and economically. Religious differences highlight the worst aspects of both cultures, meanwhile neither the single State Authorities, nor EU or UN have been able to deal with this distressing theme: they are reacting to it as an emergency, instead of acting in accordance with a strategy. It is growing the tendency to recast Islam and immigrants as a security problem: almost everywhere policymakers are adopting stricter rules for immigration and integration, focusing on Islamic practices as a source of social problems.

Italy's historical experience on the matter (having given millions of its subjects to migration along the centuries) and it's geographic position (a step from the Balkans powder keg and from the

conflict in the Middle East, being the first country on the front line of prosperity for the South of the world populations, and North Africa) should enable it to be more proactive to that dramatic problem. Italy is the only country whose borders are the same few kilometres away from Bern as from Tunis: the peculiarity of this strange geographic *pendularity*, further enhanced by the collapse of the Berlin Wall, offers it an enormous strategic value, looking out across the Mediterranean, to Africa and the Balkans. It should therefore be inevitable for Rome to be watchful to the East as well as a fruitful bridge to the Mediterranean, looking in particular positively to Africa as a potential prosperous market of consumers, perhaps another China, nearer to us. We should engage in this endeavour for the safety of the area and the welfare of its *ressortissants*.