



Colonel X. looks at geopolitics and global strategic issues

The Decoder of Geopolitics

2018 Q1 - February 2018

Each quarter a senior French military officer, former member of the Special Forces, shares his perspective on global geopolitical issues. As would be expected, his name remains confidential.

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Kanaky, a new Melanesian state in 2018

Originally from the 7th Continent, with nearly 18,500 km² for approximately 270,000 inhabitants today, 1,422,543 km² of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), its longest frontier borders Australia. New Caledonia ("*Kanaky*") is actively preparing for a referendum on self-determination, after having achieved significant autonomy¹ and citizenship of its own. The French Prime Minister travelled there at the beginning of November to address the delicate subject of the composition of the special voters list. A territory at the crossroads between Asia and the Pacific, it is a key area for this strategic Oceania, especially when it is invited to the Security Council table under the banner of "*France*". It faces China, Japan and even South Korea, confronts their expansionist tendencies, without falling under their "*chequebook diplomacy*" at the UN. One bloc observes with apprehension: Australia, New Zealand and the United States². The existence of the FRANZ and QUAD³ agreements would surely need to be reviewed. Its great fishing and mining wealth, including nickel⁴, whose market is deteriorating and whose extraction is barely profitable, attracts more than just attention; yet it is not enough to make it totally independent, even if tourism was valued. Independence has a cost, especially for a population with a high standard of living⁵, with a very present public service but an economy under metropolitan perfusion. The vote on the future of this great island is to be expected at the end of the year, with the hope that there will be no societal partition or scuffles; too many multiple and sensitive interests are at stake.

¹ The Matignon-Oudinot Accords of June and August 1988, followed by the Nouméa Accords in 1999. Title XIII of the French Constitution is entirely dedicated to the "Transitional provisions relating to New Caledonia". All sovereign powers remain with France until the referendum on self-determination.

² The "Echelon" network is already far behind but still listening and "PRISM" has made a name for itself in Europe.

³ FRANZ (FR, Aust, N-Z) for the coordination of civil-military assistance to disaster-affected countries; QUAD: Quadrilateral Defense Coordination Group (+ US) deals with maritime safety and security in the Pacific EEZs.

⁴ Third largest nickel reserve in the world and 6th largest producer. Polymetallic nodules, cobalt and phosphates.

⁵ With a per capita GDP of \$37,000, it is behind Australia and ahead of New Zealand, well ahead of Fiji and Vanuatu with \$4,900.

Cyprus, a vital aircraft carrier

Turkey has been a member of NATO since 1952. Cyprus has been a member of the EU since 2004 with the singularity that the whole island is part of the EU. The Turkish Cypriots are European citizens and citizens of the Republic of Cyprus without being under the control of the Cypriot Government. Cyprus is still not a member of NATO, while the Turkish, UN soldiers are still stationed on the island. In spite of this, however, there has recently been an undeniable strategic interest in a small and expanding naval base⁶ for NATO, the EU⁷ and Russia! A diplomatic and circumstantial exchange currency to deal with migrants' flows as far as possible and to initiate preliminary discussions for NATO⁸ membership, if Turkey were to imagine leaving the organization, without reunification⁹ being recorded.

Cameroon in balance

Far from the partition of the German colony in 1919, it is above all the resurgence of the end of the British mandate¹⁰, at the time of independence in 1961, that is shaking this country now, whose presidential elections will occur in October 2018; thirty-six years of power, very centralized, under the rule of Paul BIYA. Since October 1, 2017, the situation has deteriorated with a latent armed struggle, whose deaths on the side of the armed forces are higher than in its fight against "*Boko Haram*", the result of repression and then radicalization. The "*Francophonization*" of the judicial and school systems was the spark for an Anglophone population marginalized¹¹ in the political and economic spheres. The western parts of the country bordering Nigeria are the most exposed. Buea, former capital of the British Southern Cameroon and Bamenda are the nodes of this movement that created the "*Federal Republic of Ambazonia*". While it is the 18th contributor to the UN peacekeeping forces, Cameroon¹², which has seen its biggest demonstration since 2008, is the subject of intense attention from both the UN, which claims to be "*concerned*", and the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency), which already speaks of a "*difficult humanitarian situation*", but also from the Commonwealth General Secretariat. Even though January 2018 began with a suicide attack in the North, the President may be letting go but not until full decentralization, federalism, or even partition, knowing that the duel of languages hides tribal issues.

Sweden¹³: a tense neutral country

More than two centuries of neutrality and yet conscription, abandoned in 2010, returns to this electoral year. The increase in the defense budget is clear and families' awareness of the risks of war is very real. Very pampered by the American ally and NATO, scorched by the annexation of the Crimea, it seriously reinvests the island of Gotland, a Baltic Sea lock, in front of the Russian military ports of Kronstadt and Baltiysk¹⁴, under Putin's almost wrathful eye for the risk of disappearing its glacis. Numerous aero-sea exercises at the end of 2017 have confirmed this tension on both the Swedish side "*Aurora17*" and the Russian side "*Zapad17*". Its commitment to the Partnership for Peace¹⁵, its ability to export arms, leads it to have some reluctance to get fully involved in the European defense industry, or even in European defense itself.

⁶ Naval base of Evangelos Florakis, near Zygi.

⁷ Military infrastructures are made available to the EU's permanent structured defense cooperation (PESCO).

⁸ Message from U.S. Ambassador Victoria NULAND, April 2016, Nicosia.

⁹ Presence of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus since 1964.

¹⁰ The British mandate will be split into two parts: one part will join French Cameroon and the other part, Nigeria.

¹¹ 20% of the population is Anglophone out of 23.4 million inhabitants (2016).

¹² Part of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC/6 members) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS / 10 members/ of which peacekeeping)

¹³ Member of the EU since 1995, outside the € zone, Schengen area, non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2018.

¹⁴ The latter port, an enclave of Kaliningrad, hosted Chinese warships during the first joint Baltic Sea exercise (July 17 / "Joint Sea 2017").

¹⁵ PFP: bilateral cooperation program between NATO and Euro-Atlantic partners.