



Colonel X. looks at geopolitics and global strategic issues

The Decoder of Geopolitics

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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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From the assassination in mid-January of a political leader of the Serb minority¹ in northern Kosovo, against whom the European missions EULEX and UNMIK raised their voices, to the name that FYROM² will definitively adopt, and including the ratification *a minima* of Montenegro's NATO accession agreement, the Balkans keep reminding us about the regional instability. The implosion of the former Yugoslavia in 1991, born under Tito, then classified as a non-aligned country, left wounds that are difficult to heal. The UN, the EU, NATO and Russia³ committed men, money, time and diplomacy. Still true today. But another chess game is going on. Albania, a NATO member since 2009 (like Croatia), is knocking at EU's door. It has a great deal of progress to make in meeting EU criteria in the areas of justice, anti-corruption and drug-combating efforts, and even freedom of the press. Hence threats, barely veiled, of union with Kosovo, with an Albanian-speaking majority. At the Eastern end, Turkey does not hide its priority to regain its political aura and a significant economic impact on this region, as in Ottoman times, by targeting Kosovo, politically fragile since the last legislative elections. Above all, Turkey holds the tap of migration to Europe, via weakened Greece and the Balkan route, ready to reopen it to put pressure on the EU. Moreover, integration into the European Union is the common denominator in this region. Serbia is among the candidates, with 2025 being mentioned as possible date of accession. NATO is also seeking to have Serbia joining. But Russia is forcing its way through increased military cooperation and the establishment of new-generation weapons, at a lower but more worrying level, in Republika Srpska (Bosnia-Herzegovina), to counter an increasingly palpable NATO encirclement by the South. All this two hours flight from Paris.

¹ Oliver Ivanovic has been Mitrovica's Serbian interlocutor since the establishment of the NATO Interposition Force (KFOR-1999-UN Resolution 1244). As a moderate political representative, he never bowed to the demands of Belgrade, Pristina or other obscure forces.

² Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The name "Macedonia" is not accepted in Greece and triggers repeated demonstrations. In talks in the assemblies, Albanian could become the second official language.

³ In June 1999, Russia joined the peacekeeping force (KFOR) in Kosovo, deploying five battalions not exceeding 2,850 troops following the incident at Pristina airport.