



Ελληνική Εταιρεία Γεωγραφικών Μελετών
«Ο Στράβων»

GEOPOLITICAL TRENDS for 2024

- The fractures to globalization will continue unabated. The nation-state will still be the master of the game. The cleavage between continental/Eurasian landmass and the maritime/ Oceanic periphery of the globe becomes apparent. The new Voelkerwanderung from the South seriously affects social fabric and way of life in many EU countries, including Greece.
- Donald Trump ante portas for reelection in November 2024. Banning his way is legally problematic and politically explosive, as it risks exacerbation of the divide within the American people.
- Rule by Presidents Xi and Putin in China and Russia will continue broadly unchallenged.
- The European Union, no matter the change of leadership, will keep being an economic giant, even affected by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, but a geopolitical sick man, precisely due to the ramifications of the war in Ukraine and its implications on energy supply and the ensuing social and political costs for the European citizens. Yet, the Union, dotted with a powerful institutional infrastructure, is in a position to reclaim its tarnished geopolitical clout in the light of external challenges, be them in Ukraine, in Palestine and beyond, or in the USA.
- 2024 is not going to be propitious. Yet, the EU, the West at large, Greece on the national level, possess the tools to cope with adversities. Our starting point is that war in Ukraine will not come to a close or for that matter to a pause. Ukraine will be further suffering; large swaths of territory and the illegally annexed Crimea in Russian hands, destruction of civil infrastructure, decimation of the fighting forces, depopulation, deep running internal divisions. Russia is in a position to better endure a protracted war than the western societies can afford. All things considered, prospects for peace are dim, unless a political tsunami occurs in the West, or a change in Kiev itself.
- In the war of Israel against Hamas and as things evolve against the Gaza Palestinians, no clear-cut exit strategy by Netanyahu is discernible. In our view the earlier IDF declares victory on the battlefield the better. A military approach to the conflict does not lead anywhere. A cessation of hostilities should be embedded in a political process. Drive for total annihilation of

Hamas is futile; it will instead lead to a Hydra like expansion of Hamas militant terrorists. The expulsion of the Gazans on the other hand, programmed or by default, would be an utterly destabilizing development. Israel will not solve its problem, but it will only shift the burden to Egypt and beyond, with abysmal consequences looming. The longer this war goes on, the more the stakes rise for seemingly reluctant Hezbollah to enter the fray, once they reckon that Israeli society is caught by war fatigue.

The attacks by Yemeni Huthis on the commercial navigation at the southern tip of the Red Sea constitute a direct and powerful pressure for ending hostilities in Gaza. Not only western but also Chinese interests impose a neutralization of the menace stemming from Huthis on this major trade artery. At short term, economic and social well-being of the corner stone country that is Egypt is seriously imperiled. Therefore, it is expedient to put the Huthis at bay. Operation "Prosperity Guardian" is a logical response to the Yemenite challenge, on the clear understanding that there will be no mission creep on the soil of Yemen which would only aggravate existing problems. But again, ultimately, war in Gaza must end the earlier possible.

It can be said that the attacks of Huthis on the maritime trade in the Red Sea, bring back to memory the proposal for an alternative trade route from India to Europe via Arab Peninsula, port of Haifa, port of Piraeus (G 20 summit in New Delhi, September 2023). This can only be a long-term project.

- Security in the Mediterranean is at crossroads, as Israel is at war of existential proportions with Hamas and pivotal Egypt's internal stability is at stake because of the war. Ideas about a Mediterranean Conference to address energy cooperation can wait. In this mayhem, neo-ottoman Turkey proceeds at intense pace to building up its war machine at every level with an aim to impose its own terms and conditions for doing business in the Eastern Mediterranean and S.E. Europe.

***Stravon of Amaseia,
Athens, January 2024***