

# Abstract: Strategic situation en

## The strategic situation at the turn of the year

### Lothar Rühl

The turn of the year from 2012 to 2013 shows an unclear view of a complicated global strategic situation of international politics. In the course of the past ten years this has been also more or less the case since the terrorist attack on America in September 2001. In each of these years, however, the constant factors dominated over the variables despite the current events, until the spring of 2011, when a storm of revolt swept over vast parts of the Arabian Middle East from North Africa to the Persian Gulf, shaking up the foundations of the post-war orders of both 1919 and 1945/48, and rejecting the strategic coordinate system of the geopolitics of the Near and Middle East - in the widest geographic sense - for all powers both external and regional. This also included the temporary result of the American-British Gulf War of 2003 against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In the North the bolt between the Kurds of Syria, Turkey and Iran has opened along the entire geographic breadth, offering the political vision of a "Free Kurdistan". Thus, the Kurd problem of territorial integrity of the nations involved, and of the borders of 1919/21, is re-emerging. In autumn, the Iraq government of the Shiite Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki reinforced the border controls with Syria, because of the concern about the development of Sunnite terrorist groups and about a possible spilling over of the fighting of the Syrian rebellion against the Assad regime into the North of Iraq. At the same time Turkey increased its air raids against Kurdish battle groups in Northern Iraq, thus demonstrating the ineffectiveness of Iraq's air defence, which is a dangerous opening especially concerning Israel's air force crossing Iraq's airspace into Iran. Although Iran is threatened by losing both a dependent ally and its strategic depth with an offshore front in Lebanon and on the Golan Heights against Israel with the regime of the Alawite Assad, it will be able to use the threat against Iraq posed by the civil war in Syria, because it makes the Shiites in Iraq increasingly dependent from the support by Iran, and because it makes it possible for Iraq to get friendly with Iran. How the civil war in Syria will end, and which consequences it will have for the Near East, remains unknown. The crisis region "Extended Middle East" concerns the economic and strategic interests of the USA and China, who actively compete for both the rich mineral resources in Africa and the oil of the Gulf Region - a rivalry in and around the Gulf Region, in which most of all China, India and Europe are involved. Russia, which has lost its African and Middle Eastern sphere of influence since the end of the Soviet power, and which tries to regain it at least partially with all available means, is also involved in this competition and the political rivalries connected with it. A new „Great Game“ for energy resources in Central Asia is under way, like in the end of the 19th century, with new players besides Russia: China and the USA, but also India, Turkey, and - instead of Great Britain alone - Europe with its bigger nations, without unity and common policy, thus also without a European strategy. In addition to that, the financial crisis in the West maybe will become a catalyst for the arising global crisis. The economic and social deficits of the USA and the EU will have general negative effects on the legal capacity of the West and NATO, thus accumulating and multiplying the crisis factors.

