Rebuilding Syria: a political and social prospective in a cognitive approach

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After the Geneva Peace Talks, the following peace process, and the Conference on Security in Munich this week end, Syria is the main question in a geopolitical perspective for the next decade. Indeed, this question is related to the process of state-building as a guarantee of peace-keeping in Syria and in the region. The Middle East stability and prosperity depend on the ways and the actors involved in rebuilding the State, as a political entity, but also as a social body and connections.

Rebuilding Syria suppose first of all to think the Syrian territory as a divided space and multiethic one, a space of cleavage and war. The geographical approach is first needed to understand the process of division that happened in Syria since 2011. Could we consider the process of “Lebanonization” as a process of destruction that we have to take in account in rethinking the establishment of authority and the re-location of the Syrian people in the different areas in Syria, especially in Aleppo and Damascus.

Rebuilding Syria suppose then to consider the question of legal authority itself, on an institutional perspective: Syria would be independent again depending on the way the state’s power and authority are managed, in terms of exclusivity, autonomy and fullness of the competences. Would we talk about a “conditional sovereignty” as Charles Zorgbibe qualified it?

Rebuilding Syria suppose finally to know more about the social conditions of the people, about the conditions of the return of the refugees, on a legal, social and cultural perspectives. I will focus deeply on the case of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon (1.2 million according to the HCR).

Those three characteristics of reconstruction involve of course the economic field, and let us think the process of reconstruction, recovering, rebuilding as a global process, analyzed in a systemic approach: who are the actors of reconstruction? Could we talk about a Syrian new regional, or even international? Could we compare Syria in 2017 to Iraq in 1991, as bringing a “new world order”, as George Bush defined it after the Gulf War? In that context, what type of new order would we attend? A Russian one? A multiregional powers one? A post-UN one? A non-western one? Could we think reconstruction in a logic of governance, involving public and private actors? All those questions help us determine the future of the Middle East and the return of realism in international relations studies and analyses.