



February 24, 2012 2:46 am

Positions on Syria are unsustainable

From Prof Zaki Laïdi.

Sir, The article by Kathrin Hille and Michael Peel on Russia, China and Syria ("[Russia and China face scrutiny over block on Assad action](#)" February 23) is right in pointing out the difference of perspective between Moscow and Beijing. But it misses two points.

The first is that there is an implicit political agreement between Moscow and Beijing at the Security Council. When Russian interests are at stake, Beijing supports Moscow and vice versa. This mutual reassurance against western powers aims at avoiding political isolation at the Security Council.

The second point is that the Chinese and Russian positions are unsustainable. They both failed to enlist the other Brics against the last resolution. India, for example, which was the staunchest vocal ally of the Assad regime at the UN, was forced to revise its position and vote with western and Arab states. Moreover, and for the first time, Beijing was in contradiction with its traditional stance, which consists in voting according to the decisions and choices made by regional organisations. China used its veto power on Burma and Zimbabwe because the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the African Union refused to endorse sanctions against those regimes. And we can interpret its abstention on the Libyan resolution by the decision taken last March by the Arab League against Muammar Gaddafi. Today, China is in contradiction with its own policy, since the Arab League is strongly advocating a tough position against the Syrian regime. It has no more excuse for justifying the use of its veto power. And that may explain why it received a Syrian opposition delegation.

It will be interesting to know what may happen at the Security Council if the situation deteriorates and Russia maintains its stubborn support of the the Assad regime.

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