

„Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues“

Cultural Relations Policy

News and Background

October 2012





About CRP News & Background

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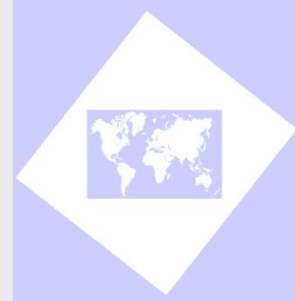
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Bosnia and Herzegovina's Cultural institutions in crisis

The national cultural institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina are in crisis. Important cultural institutions such as the National Museum, the Art Gallery and the National Film Archive were closed this year. Other cultural institutions also could be out of function in the early future, such as the Historical Museum, the Museum of Literature and Theatre Arts, the National and University Library and the National Library of the Blind and Partially Sighted People. These institutions are all in critical situation, they cannot pay the bills and their employees' salary due to the withdrawal of all financial support. These institutes are all in the capital of the country.

The most important among the endangered institutions is the National Museum which is the oldest cultural and historical institute in the country. It was founded 124 years ago, at the time when the first museums were built in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This time the country was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By building museums the Empire wanted to give a sense to the local population of belonging to the Monarchy. Later the museum survived two world wars and the Yugoslav wars. The most famous treasure of the museum is Sarajevo Haggadah. It's a



Photo: cultureshutdown.net

hundreds-year old handwritten Jewish book collection, which is not only important for the Jewish community in Bosnia, but for the whole country, because it became the symbol of interfaith cooperation and respect in the multiethnic country. The museum was closed on 4 October 2012.

For the calling of Anti Dayton Group on 2 October 2012 a bunch of people started to protest in front of the National Museum in Sarajevo. According to the organisers their example was the former action at the National Museum of Belgrade, which had similar problems in 2011 and citizens also stood up for the museum. The group in Sarajevo, however, could not hinder the closing of the museum. The director of

Contemporary Art Collection declared he would resign as a consequence of the situation. The electricity of the National and University Library had already been cut off. Protesting against the austerity measures, cultural activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina besides many other countries founded a website, *cultureshutdown.net* where contributors publish information about the current situation and try to find solution for the problems.

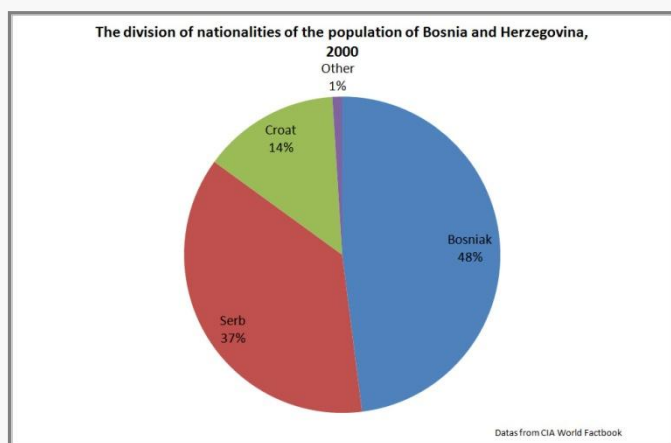


Chart: Adam Sashalmi

The dispute about these national cultural institutions has begun in 1995 since the Dayton Accords delegated the financing of these institutions to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. But according to this agreement cultural questions must be discussed on canton or entity level. In the federal parliament Serb and Bosniak parties are nearly equal and the multi-ethnic parties have large number of representatives. The multi-ethnic Social Democratic Party of Bosnia received the majority of the votes during the last election. So if the cultural problems were discussed on federal level, the party could probably foster compromise. However the

multi-ethnic parties are weak in the entity parliaments while the local ethnic-nationalist parties have a strong support, especially in the Republika Srpska. Governments of the entities do not accept any responsibility for the institutions and the parties cannot agree on the funding of cultural institutions.

The Bosnian war was the bloodiest among the Yugoslav wars, when three ethnic groups fought against each other: Serbs against Croats, Serbs against Bosniaks and Croats against Bosniaks with ethnic cleansings. The war was ended by the Dayton Accords in 1995. Two entities were made within the country: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is divided



Map: Adam Sashalmi

CULTURE SHUT DOWN

Bosniak and Croat cantons, and the Republika Srpska. Brčko is governed by international forces. There are also observers for the United Nations in the whole country. The two regions have local parliaments, own governments and even armies. The real power of governance is on the regional level, not on the federal level.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's main problem is that the country is seriously divided. This part of Europe was always a meeting point of different cultures. There are three dominant religions: Islam, Orthodox and Roman Catholic. There are other minor religions such as Judaism. The different ethnics are closely related with the religions. The Bosniaks are predominantly Muslims, the Serbs are mainly Orthodox and the majority of Croats is Roman Catholic. Although the ethnic differences are not principal among the three ethnic groups, their different religion is the key factor of distinction. The largest ethnic group is the Bosniak, however they comprise less than 50% of the whole population. Concerning the religions Muslim people are only 40% of the population.

According to the people who are concerned about the future of the cultural

institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dayton Accords shall be modified and cultural questions should be discussed on federal level. Alternatively these cultural institutions should be financed by governments of entities. However, there are concerns that in this case the entities would prefer to promote their own culture. If both entities had their own cultural institutes it would give an impetus to a process which could lead to the symbolic termination of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is known that there is an influence from the symbolic and financial supporters of Bosnia's ethnic groups. Serbia, Croatia and the Muslim countries often send money to Bosnia and Herzegovina for cultural and religious purposes nowadays. These countries could back the endangered institutions but the non-benefited groups would be probably discontented with this kind foreign support.

Leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina have to act very carefully regarding cultural questions. The political atmosphere again can become very tense nowadays. No ethnic group should be favoured at the expense of the others. Bosnia and Herzegovina must save its most important cultural institutions to avoid an identity crisis. The future of the country can be unstable if symbolic cooperation is questioned or criticised.

The division among the seats of parliamentary parties by the ethnics in the common and in the two regional parliaments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010			
	House of Representatives of the Parliamentay Assmbeley of Bosnia and Herzegovina	National Assemby of Republika Srpska	House of Representatives of the Parliament of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Multi-ethnic parties	26%	12%	35%
Bosniak nationalist	31%	3%	46%
Serb Nationalist	31%	85%	1%
Croat Nationalist	12%	0%	18%

Table: Adam Sashalmi

Divided Mali could face military intervention

A civil war erupted in the beginning of 2012 in Mali, a country which is home to numerous ethnic groups. The Tuareg rebellion in the northern part of the country converted into a war of independence against the Malian government. The aim of the fighting groups is to secede the Sahara desert region of Azawad from Mali. Their militant organization, called National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (NMLA) declared independence for the region in April 2012.

After the end of Libyan civil war Tuareg mercenaries from Muammar Gaddafi's army returned to their country of origin. They managed to bring large number of weapons from Gaddafi's former arsenal to the northern part of Mali. Soon after the end of Arab Spring many of them joined Tuareg rebel groups. The National Mo-



Photo: Alfred Weidinger [Flickr]

vement of Azawad, a political group with radical Tuareg students and graduates also joined the evolving militias. They started fights in alliance with Islamic groups, such as Ansar Dine ('defenders of the faith') and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa. These movements had been allegedly supported by al-Qaeda. Earlier this year the Tuareg rebel forces captured some of the key cities of Northern Mali.

Tuareg separatist groups have been struggling for independence in Northern Mali since the early 1990s. At the beginning these fights had been caused by the political and economical problems. Later certain ethnic groups, such as the Songhai started to criticise the government it was unable to protect inhabitants from Tuareg and Arab rebels. As the threatened groups organised militant units, those fights later turned into an ethnic war.

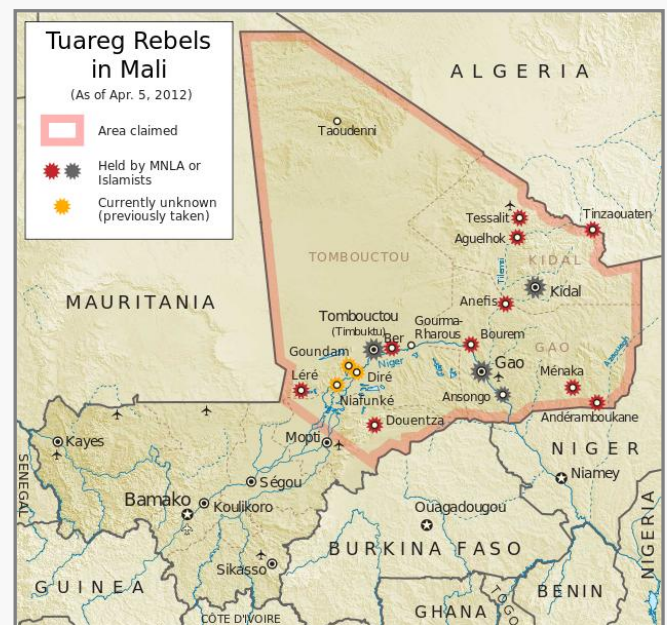
The Malian army attacked back and started operations in the Northern part of the country. In March 2012 Malian soldiers who were displeased with the management of the operations have seized the power from the government. The leader of the coup d'état, Armadou Sanogo was an officer of the army. After the coup he proclaimed himself the leader

of the National Committee for Recovering Democracy and Restoring the State (CNRDRE) and declared the suspension of the constitution. Consequently, the international community condemned the coup. Additionally, the United States and the World Bank suspended the aids to Mali. The West African Economic and Monetary Union managed to make an agreement with the junta. Sanogo and President Armadou Toumani Touré accepted to resign and give the power to the Speaker of National Assembly, Dioncounda Traoré. The government authority became divided between civilian governance with the president and the prime minister on the one side, and a military junta on the other.

During the conflict of Touré and Sanogo, the Tuareg forces captured Kidal, the capital of the region. On 6 April the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (NMLA) declared the independence of Azawad. The Malian army was forced to retreat from the region.

The de facto independent state of Azawad however faced with deep social and ethnic problems. Islamic groups supported to introduce Sharia law in Azawad which generated a conflict between Tuaregs and Islamic organizations. Soon after the Malian withdrawal the anti-secessionist National Liberation Front of Azawad (NLFA) was formed to defend the territory from alleged Tuareg domination. The members of this militia were mainly Arabs who described themselves as the enemies of NMLA.

In October thousands of people marched on the streets of Bamako, the capital of Mali, asking intervention from West-African countries against the Islamic groups. United States and France started talks with Algeria to take part in the joint intervention. Algeria faced with a complex problem as around 50,000 Tuaregs live in the country, who would discourage the intervention. At the same time Algeria had to take into account of the risk of a failed state next to its borders.



The current political situation of Mali is complex. The country is predominantly Islam in religion. Approximately 90% of the population is Muslim. During the Tuareg rebellion radical Islamic groups fought against the central government in alliance with MNLA. After the declaration of independence, the former allies turned against each other. The Islamic groups allegedly have relations with al-Qaeda and

probably foreign mujahideen came to Mali in order to service these movements. In the southern part of the country the majority of the people want intervention from the neighbour countries. Southern Mali is also divided between the civilian government and the junta made of military leaders of Malian army.

The United States and the member states of the European Union were planning a military intervention in Mali. These states fear that the area can become a future base for terrorists. The United States and France would send drones and Germany offered to train Malian security forces. These powers have to wait for the consent of United Nations Security Council. The United Nations asked African regional organisations to make a plan for military intervention in 45 days. Western powers

reminded that they are not intending to send troops to Mali. Rather their governments would support Malian army with air strikes and logistics. In the meanwhile West African leaders agreed to send 3,000 troops to take control in Northern Mali under the aegis of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States).



Photo: Alfred Weidinger [Flickr]

“TUAREGS HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING FOR INDEPENDENCE SINCE THE EARLY 1990S”

Historical peace agreement in the Philippines

After many years of fights it seems the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) managed to conclude an agreement in the Philippines. MILF had fought against the Philippine government over four decades in the island of Mindanao. During the fights more than 150,000 people died and at least 500,000 people had to leave their homes, in addition the conflict generated vast problems in the economy of the Philippines. In October 2012 President Benigno Aquino declared that his government managed to agree with MILF. According to the deal an autonomous region will be created at the southern part of the island. The agreement was signed on 15 October 2012.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front welcomed the plan and urged the Islamic people of the country to support the government's idea. MILF First Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar said their government in the autonomous region would protect the rights of non-Muslim people as well. If the terms of the agreement are accepted, warlords and criminals could be confined in the island. The name of the autonomous region would be Bangsamoro. The province would have a local government and own police force

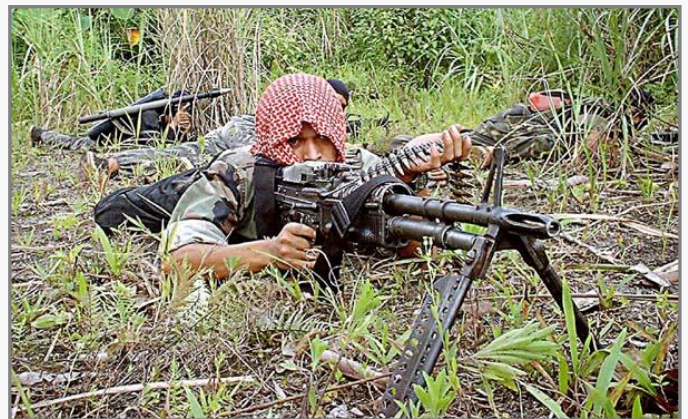


Photo: Keith Kristoffer Bacongco [Flickr]

which may overcome crime successfully. The talks between the Philippine government and MILF were backed by an international monitoring team which included Norway, Brunei, Japan and Libya.

MILF is the most influential Islamic rebel group in the Philippines. In 1977 some of the hard-line members left Moro National Liberation Front, the first Islamic political organisation of the country. After a couple of years of exile the group formally established MILF in 1984. It was initiated as a radical movement, however nowadays its leaders are not just ready to talk with the government but often make joint actions with Philippine military as well. As a result of MILF's changing political attitude, rival Islamic groups emerged in the country

recently. One of these organisations is the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement which does not accept the recent agreement. So does the Awliyah which is allegedly linked with Al-Qaeda. Besides political organisations, there are a number of terrorist and criminal groups on Mindanao as well.



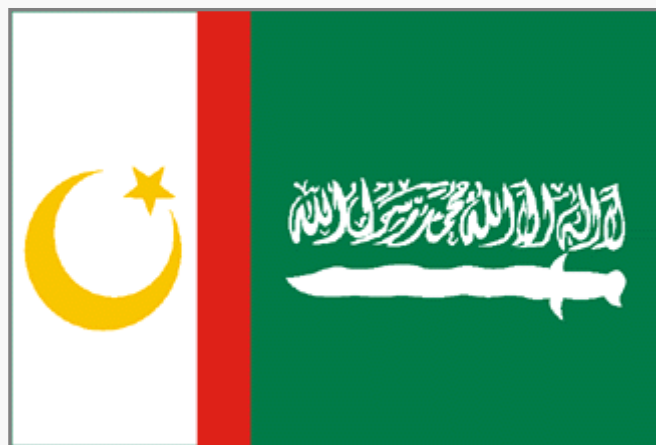
Photo: Mark Navales [Flickr]

The Philippine government had similar plans earlier to make peace in the southern region. The government made an agreement with MNLF in 1996, but many rebels groups did not accept this deal and continued fights. An autonomous region was also created under the name Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. This initiative, however, was not successful due to that warlords and criminals obtained power causing serious problems for both local people and the government. The current plan for an autonomous region was primarily established by the government, although MILF is also concerned and willing to take part in the

process of delegating political authorities. Nonetheless, in order to create the new entity, a new law have to be passed by the Congress of the Philippines.

The Philippines was a colony of the Spanish Kingdom between the 16th century and the late 19th century. Due to the Spanish domination and missionaries the religion of most of the population is Roman Catholic. Islam is predominant in the country's southern island of Mindanao and Sulu archipelago. The Muslim society seeks for more freedom and own governance. Their conflicts with the Catholic government are yet to be solved.

Perhaps the Philippine government have learnt from the mistakes of its predecessor and currently making efforts to bring permanent peace in the Southern Philippines. The government together with MILF can defeat the warlords and provide security in Bangsamoro. If they managed to carry out this task, the masses of refugees could return back to their homeland.



Flag of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the European Union

After nominated for many times before, European Union was awarded to Nobel Peace Prize in October 2012. The Nobel Peace Prize is one of the five Nobel Prizes bequeathed by Alfred Nobel. The Peace Prize is awarded in Oslo, Norway, while the other prizes are awarded in Stockholm, Sweden. It has been awarded annually since 1901 and presented to either an individual or an organization. According to Alfred Nobel's will the prize is awarded to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between the nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

The awarding of the prize to the European Union in 2012 was politically controversial due to the supra-national organisation got the prize after a year of continuous protests in many European capitals and at the time of monetary crisis of Euro caused the worst recession for 80 years. The nomination of the Norwegian Nobel Committee was principally criticised owing to these circumstances. Ignoring the critics Nobel Committee awarded the Peace Prize to the European Union, which became laureate due to the continuous and successful contributions for peace,

reconciliation, democracy and promoting human rights. According to the committee the EU managed to make Europe the "continent of peace".



The most criticised sentence was from the chairman of the committee, Thorbjorn Jagland. He described EU as a "peace-maker in the Balkans". Critics say for example the EU member state Germany caused many problems in the crisis by recognising Croatia as a legal state too early. During the Yugoslav war European Union was not unified in its views on foreign policy. Germany supported Slovenia and Croatia, while other EU member states could not decide whether and how they had to intervene. Unlike most EU member states Greece supported the Serbs during this period.

On the other hand, European history was the history of wars. European great powers fought each other many times, but nowadays European leaders believe that these countries have been living together in peace for decades due to the formation of EU. It seems strange that Norway - home of Nobel Peace Prize - rejected the membership of EU twice. President of European Council Herman van Rompuy and President of European Commission Manuel Barroso welcomed the decision.

The EU usually chooses the peaceful discussion instead of military intervention in conflicts unlike the United States. European Union also took part in many conflicts as mediator. Critics say discussion is not always the best choice if the European Union wants to be a determinative power of the world. The functioning of EU military strategy was last time questioned harshly during the Arab Spring, nonetheless that region is geopolitically important for the European Union.



Photo: EU representatives Herman Van Rompuy, Jose Manuel Barroso and Martin Schulz (L-R) hold the Nobel Peace Prize certificate and medal [Reuters: Suzanne Plunkett]

Hezbollah's drone was shot down by Israel

A sensitive warning for Israel

On 11 November, 5 days after an unidentified airplane was shot down over south Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu blamed the Lebanese Hezbollah as responsible for the intervention. Soon after the Israeli Prime Minister's statement, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah leader of Hezbollah took responsibility and shared some information via a broadcasted speech. As he defined, the drone – unmanned aerial vehicle – was made in Iran and was assembled in Lebanon by Shi'ite militants. Nasrallah said the drone could fly over sensitive Israeli areas, adding that Israel is breaking the law by entering 20,468 times in Lebanese airspace since 2006. However the drone was not mentioned carrying any kind of weapon, it caused a challenge to the Israeli Air Defense. The small plane was named after Prophet Ayyoub (known in English as Job). The drone flew dozens of kilometres inside Israeli airspace before it was downed. The relative success of this border crossing enlightened the lack of capabilities of Israel to keep the airspace under total control. The Iron Dome system is established to protect the country from short-range missiles launched by Hamas or Hezbollah. Just after the incident Israeli experts described this defense program is designed to intercept missiles but not small velocity airplanes.

The biggest concerns about this flight caused by the taken route of the drone. It took off in Lebanon then flew over the sea and turned south to travel international airspace for a while. After this it entered Israeli airspace from the west and travelled 55 kilometres (35 miles) deep into the territory of Israel and reached the air zone of the Dimona nuclear research site, which has an airspace firmly closed to all aircraft and the surrounding of it is heavily guarded. This site is known as the secret nuclear camp of Israel aiming to secure nuclear weapons and mass destructive capabilities for the country's military.

Following Hezbollah's success in flying an Iranian-made drone over Israel, a senior Iranian military commander said the Tel Aviv regime must expect hundreds of other



Iron Dome battery in Ashkelon. Photo: Israel Defense Forces [Flickr]

drones with which it has no clue how to deal. Few days after Hezbollah drone, "Ayyoub", flew hundreds of kilometers into Israeli airspace, Israel replaced the commander of its Air Force's Air Defense Layout Brigadier General Doron Gavish.



Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah

The well-planned flight of the drone in October was certainly a response to Israel's declaration which envisaged Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities in the case of the negotiation and sanctions can not succeed. Iran to give up its nuclear program. While Hezbollah's Iranian connection is not a subject to confidentiality, its behaviour regarding the Syrian civil war is under dispute. The certain linkage of Hezbollah to the Syrian regime is on the basis of religion. The Lebanese group follows Shia Islam, and the Alewite belief of Assad is a kind of offshoot of Shi'ism. Despite international accusations, Nasrallah clearly denied any form of Hezbollah's support given to Assad, but even added that there are some sympathizers of them who are involved in

the Syrian events, but they act as individuals, and they are not backed by the group.

According to Western analysts Iran wanted to demonstrate its military power with this action. The drone probably captured images about secret Israeli military sites. It flew more than 300 kilometres (186 miles), and made pictures about joint military exercises between Israel and the United States. It probably also made images from ballistic missiles, airfields and the nuclear reactor in Dimona. However, in fact, it was a military-political action to indicate to Israel and the United States that they could attack the Jewish State and American military bases in the Middle East as well.



Iran also declared that the defence system of Israel is vulnerable. The Iron Dome anti-missile system - which was developed jointly with the US Army and co-funded by Israel and the United States - may not operate properly. However, the Iron Drone was made against missiles, not aircrafts.

The relations between Israel and Iran are tense and have an effect on other countries in the Middle East as well. Iran is developing its nuclear project, stating Tehran only intends to use nuclear power for civilian energy purposes. Though Israel claims Iran wants to build up nuclear weapons with those Israel could be attacked. Presumably Israel possesses nuclear weapons, however has never admitted it.

**“IRAN DECLARED
THE DEFENCE SYSTEM OF
ISRAEL IS VULNERABLE”**



Ayyoub drone supposedly scanned Israel's secret military sites

Qatar emir and money to Gaza

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani emir of Qatar is the first head of state who took a brief 4-hour visit in the Gaza Strip on 23 October, and generously granted 400 million US dollars on housing and infrastructural projects. With this step he broke the political isolation of both Gaza and Hamas, which started after Hamas won the 2006 parliamentary election, since then its collaboration with the West-preferred Fatah has ended. Because Hamas is considered as a terrorist group it fell into deep isolation by other countries. In the speech of the emir hold at Gaza's Islamic University he focused on the unity of the Palestinians on the solid basis of their common interests. Controversially enough, Mahmoud Abbas, the internationally recognised leader of the Palestinians was not invited to participate the visit which boosts the respect of Hamas, and shows a new patron of the organization has established strong political and economical relations to an Arab state allied with the West. The Israeli Foreign Ministry did not welcome the visit and stated the emir is going to finance terrorists and label the event harmful on Hamas-Fatah co-operation in the future.

Israel intercepted Estelle

Naval forces of Israel assaulted and diverted the pro-Palestinian Swedish-owned, Finnish-flagged 40-metres long schooner SV Estelle when it tried to challenge the maritime blockade set up by Israel against the Gaza Strip. The ship is widely known of its journeys aiming humanitarian, environmental purposes, representing solidarity with communities and often labelled as the fair trade sailboat. These operations are carried out by a volunteer crew on board.

The vessel left the Italian port of Naples on 7 October and carried some 30 activists – from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Italy, Greece, Spain, Canada and even 3 of them are Israelis. The ship was loaded with goodwill cargo: cement, books musical instruments and basketballs for children as they reported.

As Israeli officials informed the press they stated the detour act on 20 October was in strict accordance with international law. They identified and surrounded the object then urged to change its route. Since the schooner did not do so, boarding of naval forces was inevitable. The ship was diverted to Ashdod's military port in Israel, and its crew were turned over to the police. The activists did not offer resistance, violence

was not used during the operation, but spokeswoman Victoria Strand of Ship to Gaza organization that launched Estelle described the boarding of forces as an attack and blamed Israel on cut the ships all communication contacts. The wide international support of the enterprise was shown not only by the multinational volunteers of Estelle but even the reacts of the Israeli interception. An Irish supporter accused Israel hijacking ships in international waters, others emphasized there is no legal basis of the blockade which jeopardise the life and standard of living of all 1,6m people of Gaza.

Israel set up a solid air-ground-water blockade to prevent military equipments'



Israeli Navy simulation in preparation for possible flotilla action in 2011
Photo: Israel Defense Forces [Flickr]

inflow to Gaza can be used against Israeli civilians after Hamas took control over the region in 2007. The government finds this legal and carries out within the scope of Israel's right for self-defence. Yuval Donio-Gideon, First Secretary at the Israeli Embassy in Finland said the event was calamitous and it reflected badly upon Israel's international respect. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu commented the case via a televised speech as a simple provocation of the country and added even the activists know that there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza. He stated if human rights would be so important for the activists, they would have sailed to Syria.

More than a dozen ships belonging to Pro-Palestinians have tried to break up the

blockade since the ominous case of the six-ship flotilla led by the Turkish vessel the Mavi Marmara in 2010, when the attack of Israeli forces caused the death of 9 activists, including 8 Turkish and an American national.



Sailing ship Estelle in Aura river in Turku in 2011

“ISRAEL CUT THE SHIPS ALL
COMMUNICATION CONTACTS”

Turkish troops' parliamentary approval to intervene in Syria

Once Turkey was one of the closest partner of Syria and Bashar al-Assad, but the use of violence and military operations on pro-democracy protesters and later rebels had a game-changing effect. Since October 2011, Syria's northern neighbour – among with Saudi Arabia and Qatar – is a heavy critic of the regime and offers severe support to the Free Syrian Army, including military equipments too. The unrest in their common border zone broke up as a result of the Turkish government's policy which also allowed the rebels to use the neighbouring Turkish territories as a safe background and a shelter against the Assad-loyal forces.



Turkey Syria borderline
Photo: AteshCommons [Wikimedia Commons]

Assad relations with Turkey clearly broke off in June, after a F-4 reconnaissance aircraft was downed by government forces. The

plane took off from Malatya airbase and after a one and half hour flight it lost communication with the base. After many guesses and fake news it came true that the plane was shot by Syrian air defense and both pilots died. However Assad took responsibility but even pointed out the plane was shot in Syrian airspace. As Ahmet Davutoğlu Turkish Foreign Minister stated the plane accidentally entered Syrian territory minutes before the attack, and as a result of the warning of the Turkish air control, it quickly left it.

On 3 October operations intensified in the region. According to Turkish reports a shell hit a house in Akçakale killing 5 people. One and a half hour later Turkish airplanes flew over the border and identified several Syrian military targets and started bombing them using heavy howitzers. The very next day the Turkish parliament gave a one-year mandatory to its ground forces to operate in the territory of an other country. As Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan described the fall of shells on Turkish territory can not be considered as accidents hereafter. He mentioned the parliamentary authorization as a tool to deterrent Syria

from further attacks, but he even added the country do not intend to intervene Syria, this is not an interest of the Turkish Republic.



Photo: James Gordon [Flickr]

Despite this threat eventual artillery fire has been carrying out by both sides causing minor casualties and damage of properties. These clashes have minimal effect on the ongoing struggle of the rebels and government forces, but Turkey – the emerging power of the Middle East – possesses the opportunity to bring this conflict into a wider Syria contra NATO context, but it is obvious too: the organization will do its best to avoid being drawn directly into the Syrian issue.

Passenger plane forced to land in Ankara

On 10 October Turkish Air Force fighters forced an Airbus belongs to Syrian Arab Airlines to modify its route and land at Esenboğa Airport. The flight from Moscow to Damascus was carrying Russian-made military equipment to Bashar al-Assad's army according to Turkish suspicion. Later reports of the Turkish Foreign Minister did not give certain proof of the munitions and used “troublesome” phrase to describe some items of the cargo. Earlier this day transportation authorities from Turkey recommended all Turkish aircrafts to keep away from Syrian airspace regarding the possibility of a retaliatory action.

Damascus demonstrated the action as “air piracy” meanwhile Russia strictly repelled Turkish accusation and blame Ankara on endangering the safety of 35 passengers many of them are Russians and stated the plane was loaded with a cargo had undergone custom clearance.

Though the plane continued flight to its original destination some hours later, the growing tension between the concerned countries is still present.

Suspected Israeli attack on Sudan

On 23 October 2012 a severe explosion with a huge white flash hit the Yamouk factory just south of Khartoum. The detonation was followed by a heavy blaze needed hours to take under control by the Sudanese emergency services. The disaster claimed the lives of two workers were inside the building and caused injuries for an other was outdoors. The factory suffered huge infrastructural damage was the manufacturer of “traditional weapons” small arms and munitions and was an important supplier of Sudan’s army.



A squadron of 8 Israeli F-15 jets dropped 4 two-ton bombs on the giant Yamouk missile factory on the outskirts of Sudan’s capital Khartoum



ISS027E011161
Astronaut Photo of Khartoum, Sudan taken from the International Space Station

Early reports stated the fire was broke out in a storeroom, but soon after the opinion of authorities has dramatically changed and started blaming Israel planned and carried out the attack with the use of its air forces. Many witnesses mentioned they had heard a sound like an airplane just before the explosion happened, later government spokesmen determined four foreign jets approaching from the west as perpetrators. Ahmed Bilal Osman, Culture and Information Minister of Sudan shared the government’s statement mentioning they have definite proof – a non-exploded missile – what makes Israeli participation certain. He also told they have right to defend themselves and threatened Israel with retaliation.

It is said that some kind of connection between this industrial site and Iran can be occurred, but Sudan labelled this news as a fiction spread by Israel. The Jewish state simply did not comment the accusations, but soon after it described Sudan as a “dangerous terrorist state” which subsidize Hamas in Gaza Strip. Israel has strong but officially denied relations with the South Sudanese anti-government rebels, and suspicion has fallen over Israel in connection with at least three attacks inside Sudan’s territory – the most memorable of them was the destroying of an entire convoy supposed carrying weapons, leading the death of many people. Timing of the operation also can be considered as a response on Qatar emir’s visit of the Strip earlier just the same day.

On 29 October two Iranian warships – a supply and helicopter carrier and a corvette – came to Port Sudan to deepen diplomatic, political and security cooperation of the two nations. Sudanese officers rejected any kind of linkage between the Iranian’s visit and the Yamouk



Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, the President of Sudan

factory issue. This statement was supported by the strong argument of the fact: the ships brought several technicians and military experts in order to exchange experiences with Sudanese colleagues.

Simultaneously Israel confronted Sudan in an other way as well. Human rights groups charge Israel on enforcing the refugees’ rights given by international law after reports discovered the torture and violent relocation to Egypt of African infiltrators from Sudan.

**“A NON-EXPLODED MISSILE MAKES
ISRAELI PARTICIPATION CERTAIN”**

Undermined rest in Southern Thailand

Thailand's deep southern provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat have suffered from an ethnic-based insurgency since the 1980s. This time a small scaled violence activity was established by the Islam Malaya community's radical members order to enhance sovereignty of their homeland, with the hope of a later autonomy or an independent state. Bangkok has not succeeded in putting down the movement, in 2006 army General Sonthi Boonyarathkalin was granted an executive power aiming a fast wipe up of the issue, but this led just a Thai political crisis, and the original challenge left unsolved. After these all, violence in the region continues in more and less intense periods, besides informal peace talks went on this year.

On 9 October gunmen killed 11 people in several incidents in Pattani – the area affected the most by fighting. Three of the victims were reported as paramilitary rangers, a kind of pro-government armed men officially not members of the country's army, who are often targeted by the rebels. Because of this fact this particular action was carried out by Islam militants very likely. Other casualties of the day included both Buddhist and Muslim Thai citizens.

No one knows much about the Islam militant groups and their relations, but they are not expected to be connected to any international jihad organizations. They are not backed by neighbouring countries, but the rebels operate a human and drug trafficking and smuggling crime network across the Thai-Malaysian border to cover their expenses. They defined Buddhist Thais and their occupying government as the enemy of the movement. They carry out attacks on government-owned schools as symbols of the Thai suppressing power. Teachers and students are also attacked regularly inside the schools and even on their route to or from there. Komsan Chomyong a teacher of Ban Bor Ngor elementary school was shot dead while crossing a separatist-controlled area on 1 October was the 152th teacher killed by separatists during the insurgency.

Using landmines against Thai owners of fruit and rubber plantations and against Muslims cultivating these fields - determined as collaborators of the enemy - resulted serious economic fall of the region. After a series of attacks and warnings shop owners got to keep shut on Fridays as Islam regulation expects, the government launched its new campaign called „Happy Friday”, providing enhanced security for customers, shop owners and marketplaces.

Warning lights of Tibet

Since the self-immolation incident in February 2009, the protest of Tibetans seems loose of any kind of control and causing the rapid increasing number of casualties. In the last one and a half year dozens of Tibetans gave attention to their protest with this unique way leading to their death most of the times. Though there is no particular reason for these cases caused the risen popularity of this way to give a word their opinion, they usually define the Chinese hard-handed policy on Tibet as the main motif of them and they also claim the Dalai Lama – the spiritual leader of Tibetans – to return China and to his people as part of the solution of the long-lasting problem caused by the occupation and violent societal transition forced by the communist Chinese regime since 1950.



The Tibetan flag. It reflects the design motif of Japanese military's Rising Sun Flag

Some 60 Tibetans including many Lamaist Buddhist monks self-immolated themselves during the last 20 months and the trends show us the worsening of the situation as the number of cases is emerging, as ten of them were reported during October. The overall majority of them were took place outside the Tibet Autonomous Region and culminated among the common border region of Qinghaj, Gansu and Sichuan



provinces and especially around Kirti Monastery. Some incidents was carried out outside of China. Tibetan self-immolations were located right next to China's Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal and close to the Parliament of India, attempting to reach

global media directly with tackling Chinese censorship and putting Beijing under international pressure at the same time.

Chinese authorities commented the deeds as terrorism, actions that endanger the social stability and the inner harmony of the country. They established new efforts to overcome the situation and offer a reward of 7,700 US dollar for those who give useful information the authorities to prevent following self-immolations. The government ordered new handling of the people are in connection with the protestors, as cutting off all governmental support (such as income support, disaster relief aid), and firing them if they are public servants.

The Dalai Lama claimed a real investigation from the authorities and expected them to face with the causes of the desperate actions. So far there is no effect of the Tibetans' deeds and it seems



only the Dalai Lama has the power to control protestors, so his role is crucial to curb suicides.

Between 22 and 26 October six protestors set themselves on fire proving the escalation of these actions. Four of them were in their twenties but curiosity there was one in his fifties and an other in his sixties. Locations were the surroundings of a military camp, a government building and a temple.

“DOZENS OF TIBETANS GAVE ATTENTION TO THEIR PROTEST WITH THIS UNIQUE WAY”

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Bilateral Relations

Merkel's Athens trip

■ Approximately 25,000 protestors rallied on streets of the Greek capital during the German Chancellor's 6-hour visit. She became the symbol of the austerity politics enforced on Greece by the EU and resulted the fall of living standard and the rise of unemployment. Merkel noted the two country are going to work together very closely and reassured the population that Greece has already accomplished a huge part of its dos. Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras welcomed the Chancellor and emphasized the partnership of their countries and showed this cooperation as a guarantee of Greece can avoid collapse and prevent its falling out of the eurozone.

Syria-Turkey relations

■ Border clashes started in October between Turkey and Syria. Soon after the Syrian civil war erupted relations between the two countries worsened. Turkey admits the Syrian refugees and supports the rebels with military equipments. On 3 October 2012 Syrian troopers fired and killed 5 Turkish civilians. On the same day Turkish force shot back and killed Syrian troopers. On 4 October Turkish parliament voted in favour the use of military against Syria. The two armies continued firing each other. On 9 October NATO Secretary, Anders Fogh Rasmussen declared, they made plans for defending Turkey against Syrian actions.

Morocco rejects Dutch medical support

■ Moroccan government kept a ship launched by Women on Waves, a pro-choice non-profit organization from the Netherlands away from the port of Smir with the blockade of its warships. This organization aims to offer abortion for those women who live in a country where this procedure is illegal taking them into international waters – a place where it is not prohibited – to carry out the operation. In Morocco as in Islam states in general, abortion is not an available option. The authorities explained the ship had no permission to port nor to provide medical service.

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Bilateral Relations

Okinawa protests against US troops

■ On 16 October two 23-year old sailors were detained by police officers of the island with the charge of raping a local woman. Both Japanese and American leaders called the deed of the servicemen unacceptable and hurried a very serious investigation of the incident. According to records this was the 5747th crime involving US personnel during the last 40 years, and Okinawa seems to be fed up with these issues and residents demonstrated against the United State's military presence which



Camp turnover ceremony held on Camp Sheilds Okinawa, Japan

means some 26,000 troops based here as a result of the island's unique geopolitical importance. Protestors also expect Tokyo to strengthen its influence on the island since according to the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement the Japanese authority is limited on US personnel of Okinawa.

Korean border region: activists, threats, defects

■ South Korean activists bombarded North Korea with propaganda materials many times before, but things start to slip out of the control of the government. Pyongyang warned its neighbour with direct military response in the case of a new leaflet action come from the other side of the border. Seoul tries to avoid confrontation on this issue so it banned this activity and used police and military officers to prevent activists launch leaflets. Despite these efforts some citizens – many of them are migrants from North Korea – dismissed all warnings and floated 50,000 leaflets in balloons from town Paju across the border on 29 October. Since August at least three soldiers defected to South, one of them killed two of his supervisors before crossed the strictly controlled border adding further tension to the relation of the Koreas.

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Internal Affairs

Georgian election winner swears “fundamental changes”

■ The Georgian Dream coalition won the election held on 1 October and its candidate the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili will be the next Prime Minister of the state in the Caucasus. The defeated Minister in office Mikheil Saakashvili accepted the results but blamed Russia supporting heavily his opponent whose success was unexpected. The new head of the cabinet has strong ties with Russia – made most of his fortune there – but defines his foreign policy will be oriented towards the West, and develop democratic institutions and the rule of law as leading purposes of his governance.

Mexican government’s controversial success in drug war

■ Heriberto „El Lazca” Lazcano Lazcano drug lord and leader of Los Zetas, one of the most ruthless criminal group in Mexico was killed during an attack carried out by the Mexican Navy’s marines on 7 October in the small town of Progreso. Lazcano was and also is a highly wanted man in the country after his corpse was stolen during its transportation to a local funeral home. This action was performed by a group of armed men who drove the body away with the hearse. The fact that it disappeared before the authorities could identify it properly undermined the reliability of the government’s statement. They said the identification process based on the fingerprint and facial analysis at the crime scene gave “strong signs” the man was Lazcano. Despite this fiasco the Calderón government has shown up severe success in its struggle against crime organizations most of them are heavily connected to drug business: the administration has deactivated 25 of the 37 most wanted criminals.



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Internal Affairs

Venezuela re-elected Chavez

■ Receiving 54 percent of the total votes Hugo Chávez President of Venezuela for 14 years earned a new 6-year mandate to fulfil his socialist vision in the country. Besides all of these the poll is considered as a turning point in Venezuela's recent history since the opposition coalition reached 45 percent and forced Chávez to a heavy and close race. The key feature of the new term will be reduction the number of those in poverty, but he even added some purposes aiming to influence middle class members and voters.

But biggest concerns are about the health condition of the President, who was diagnosed and treated with cancer - many times in Cuba. His opponent Henrique Capriles Radonski faces the challenge of keeping the loose union of opposition groups together and launching a more effective campaign for a better result in the governor election in December.



Photo: Flickr



Burning of a Rohingya village in Rakhine

Humanitarian crisis in Myanmar

■ After newer violence in West-Myanmar thousands of Muslim people had to go towards crowded camps. Since June more than 150 people have been killed in Rakhine state and in October fights started again. These attacks by the troopers posed as reforms of the government. 800 thousand Muslim people live in the majorly Buddhist country, the government calls them "Bengalis" and claims they are immigrants from neighbour Bangladesh.

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International Affairs

Shell is taken to court

■ The Anglo-Dutch oil company is under the charge of Nigerian farmers who claimed the company to pay a financial compensation after oil pollution caused damage of their properties, especially their cultivated lands that ensure them to earn a living of their families. The accusation was initiated to a civil court in the Hague by



four farmers from different locations of the oil-wealth Niger Delta and supported by the Dutch branch of the global environmental organization Friends of the Earth. The company rejected the accusation and affirmed the oil spills caused by sabotage, theft and illegal oil refining and the general insecurity in the area pulls back the expeditive repairing of the damaged pipeline and the environmental restoration. If the court obliges Shell to compensate the plaintiffs this case can easily produce a precedent and it can encourage many others to hand in their claims.



Five new members of the UN Security Council

■ On 18 October 2012 the United Nations General Assembly elected Argentina, Australia, Rwanda in the first, Republic of Korea and Luxembourg in a second round to non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council which deals with the most important global and peace-related issues. The Council contains 5 permanent members (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States) and 10 non-permanent ones with a two-year mandate elected 5 in each year. There are country groups according to the country's geographical location and a candidate required to obtain the two-third majority of votes of the General Assembly. The representative of the Democratic Republic of Congo objected to Rwanda's membership because "Rwanda was an oasis for criminals" and this is not consistent with the peace and justice respected behaviour expected from the UN Security Council.

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International Affairs

Shot Pakistani activist transported to UK

■ On 9 October Malala Yousufzai, the 15 year old schoolgirl and activist was shot during her way to home from school after a group of gunmen stopped the bus and wounded her in the head. She is known as an advocator of girl's education in the Pashtu region in Pakistan near the Afghan border. A spokesman of the Pakistani Taliban explained the reason of the attack was her promotion of Western culture and that she became a symbol of this. The victim received emergency care in Pakistan including a 3-hour operation while doctors removed the bullet from near the spinal cord, then – six days after the attack – she was flown to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, England, which institute was built to offer the highest quality treatment for patients with severe wounds and specialised on the medical care of British battle casualties. Doctors said she has a good chance of recovery, Taliban attempts to target her again, if she survives.

Teargas over the Gulf

■ Bahrain's security service fired teargas and stun grenades to disperse the march of anti-government protestors in the central of the capital, Manama on 12 October. In the end of the month the government banned all gatherings and took legal actions against those who organized or participated on them. The Sunni-ruled country's authorities blamed Iran encouraging the demonstrations of protestors who struggle against the discrimination of the population's Shia Muslim majority. In Kuwait police used teargas and fired rubber bullets to end protest of thousands of people who discommended the proposed changes of election law which can influence heavily the results of the poll of 1 December in favour of the ruling al-Shabab family. Opposition leaders called their sympathisers to boycott this event.



Women in a tear gas cloud in Bahrain. Photo: Al Jazeera [Flickr]

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International Affairs

Car bombing in Lebanon

■ Lebanese chief of intelligence and anti-Syrian politician Wissam al-Hassan among with at least 3 others were killed by a car bombing in Achrafieh the Christian dominant district of Beirut on 19 October. The explosion wounded about 110 people so authorities called people for donate blood to ensure satisfying medical service. Members of the West-backed political group 14 March directly accused the Syrian regime of the blast, but Information Minister of Damascus Omran al-Zoubi labelled the bombing a cowardly terrorist attack and denied its linkage to Assad's government. Hezbollah also criticised the attack and added it targeted the stability and the unity of Lebanon – which country is not far from the risk of escalating violence or a new civil war in the region.

El Classico under boycott

■ On 1 October Palestinian footballer Mahmoud Sarsak rejected invitation by FC Barcelona to visit the team's match with Real Madrid. As he referred he do not want to participate the event where Gilad Shalit – a former Israeli soldier who was held captive in Gaza for more than five years – also got invitation. The background of Sarsak's definite response was his 3-year lasting Israeli imprisonment, he became known after he started a hunger strike to protest against his detention with no charge. He was freed in July this year. He apologised for football fans and noted he accept other invites of Spanish clubs with pleasure if Israeli soldiers are not on the guest list. Hamas in Gaza called media channels not to broadcast the match ended 2-2.

Pope prays Arabic

■ During his weekly address held on 10 October at St Peter's Square the pope introduced a new language into the communication of the Roman Catholic Church. For the first time ever Benedict XVI prayed a sentence ("May God bless you all.") in Arabic. The pilgrims interviewed after the speech gave very positive feedbacks and welcomed the attempt of the head of the church to reach even more people. The background of this deed is the Vatican's effort to promote peace in the Middle East and between religions, and to ensure Christians of this region that the Pope does not leave them alone in these hard times.



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