

"Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues"

Cultural Relations Policy

News and Background

October 2013





About CRP News & Background

Cultural Relations Policy News & Background is a part of ICRP Monthly Review Series and an initiative of Institute for Cultural Relations Policy Budapest. Launched in 2012, its mission is to provide information and analysis on key international political events. Each issue covers up-to-date events and analysis of current concerns of international relations on a monthly basis.

As an initiative of ICRP, the content of this magazine is written and edited by student authors. The project, as part of the Institute's Internship Programme provides the opportunity to strengthen professional skills.



Editorial Team

Series Editor | András Lőrincz

Authors – October 2013 | Endre András Kozma, Zuzana Balcová, Eszter Balogh,
Csilla Morauszki

Executive Publisher | Csilla Morauszki

© **Institute for Cultural Relations Policy**

ICRP Geopolitika Kft

45 Gyongyosi utca, Budapest 1031 – Hungary

ISSN 2063-8205

Contents



-
- 01** World leader surveillance programme: the scandal is growing

 - 04** Ukraine approaching the EU

 - 06** Greece needs third bailout

 - 07** Clashes in Syria

 - 09** US attitude to Iran's nuclear program

 - 11** Egypt's celebrations finish in bloody confrontation

 - 13** Turkish-Japanese ties warm as following Abe's visit to Ankara

 - 14** Putin is getting into the centre of international attention

 - 16** Closer ties are to be built between Russia and India

 - 18** China and India to ensure peace together

 - 20** Summits in the Asia-Pacific region

 - 22** Nuclear reactor restarted in North Korea

 - 24** Brazil facing mass demonstrations

 - 26** Venezuela and Paraguay to restore diplomatic relations

 - 27** Three top US diplomats expelled from Venezuela

 - 29** News in Brief

World leader surveillance programme: the scandal is growing

While heads of state and government are getting more and more furious about the United States' growing spying scandal, US Secretary of State John Kerry has tried to defend the need for increased surveillance saying it had prevented several terrorist attacks. "We have actually prevented airplanes from going down, buildings from being blown up, and people from being assassinated because we have been able to learn ahead of time of the plans." – he said. However, he has also admitted that in some cases NSA spying has gone too far.

The so-called "head of state collection" has been disclosed by NSA contractor Edward Snowden who would face charges in the US because of the unauthorised disclosures, but who has been granted temporary asylum in Russia. According to the revealed documents, spying programs have observed emails, phone calls and other forms of communication of several US allies. If rumours are to be believed, US intelligence has even gained access to communications to and from former President of Mexico Felipe Calderón and current President Enrique Peña Nieto, but German Chancellor Angela Merkel's personal cell phone was also wiretapped

for up to ten years. In addition, US agencies have spied on around 70 million calls in France and in Spain between December 2012 and January 2013.

```
SelectorType PUBLIC DIRECTORY NUM
SynapseSelectorTypeID SYN_0044
SelectorValue ██████████
Realm 3
RealmName rawPhoneNumber
Subscriber GE CHANCELLOR MERKEL
Ropi S2C32
NSRL 2002-388*
Status A
Topi F666E
Zip 166E
Country Name
CountryCode GE
```

Data used by the NSA to spy on Chancellor Merkel

International reactions were quick and angry. Discussions with US ambassadors were followed by official declarations and personal phone calls.

Mexican Foreign Ministry has emphasized in its statement that "This practice is unacceptable, illegitimate and contrary to Mexican law and international law. In a relationship of neighbours and partners, there is no room for the kind of activities that allegedly took place".

Chancellor Merkel herself furiously demanded assurances from President



Obama that her mobile phone was not the target of American intelligence.

French President, François Hollande has expressed “deep disapproval of these practices, which are unacceptable between friends and allies because they infringe on the privacy of French citizens”.

Spanish Foreign Minister, José Manuel Garcia-Margallo has confirmed that “As in previous occasions, we have asked the US ambassador to give the government all the necessary information on an issue which, if it was to be confirmed, could break the climate of trust that has traditionally been the one between our two countries”.



Edward Snowden

While the damage to core American relationships continues to mount, a European delegation in charge of meeting US government officials was also established. Originally, this group would have been responsible only for the negotiation of a major transatlantic free-trade pact, however – having regard to the recent incident – it has already warned that the United States must take steps to restore confidence and diplomatic relations with its European key allies.

Otherwise, the US would jeopardise the talks on the Transatlantic Free Trade Area (TAFTA). “Friends and partners do not spy on each other. That is simply a principle.” – said Viviane Reding, Vice President of the European Commission. She has also raised the question: “How can you build this trade agreement, which is in the common interest, if you do not have at the basis confidence and trust?”

Besides the European Union, Germany also sent a separate delegation to the White House to carry on more-precise discussions about intelligence practices.

The scandal has reached Australia and Asia as well. According to Sydney Morning Herald newspaper, Australian embassies in Asia have been used to spy on Asian countries such as Vietnam, Singapore, China, Thailand or Indonesia. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia has declined to comment on these accusations, however Prime Minister Tony Abbott has declared that “Every Australian governmental agency, every Australian official [...] operates in accordance with the law”.

Nevertheless, China and other mentioned South Asian governments have demanded an explanation from the United States.

Spokeswoman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Hua Chunying said that “We also demand that foreign embassies in China and their staff respect the Vienna Convention [...] and other international treaties and not get involved in any activities which do not accord with their status or post and harm China's security and interests”.



Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Marty Natalegawa has emphasized that if the allegations confirmed, it would mean not only “a breach of security, but also a serious breach of diplomatic norms and ethics and certainly not in the spirit of friendly relations between nations”.

And if it was not enough for Washington, six major technology companies have also called the government to control better the NSA's activities. Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Yahoo, AOL and Apple have signed a common letter to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary saying that greater supervision and more transparency would help to improve privacy protection and rebuild trust in government surveillance programs. As the letter says: “Transparency is a critical first step to an informed public debate, but it is clear that more needs to



"Stop Watching US" rally in Washington DC, October 26, 2013

be done. Our companies believe that government surveillance practices should also be reformed to include substantial enhancements to privacy protections and appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms for those programs.”

What did President Obama know?

According to some US administration officials, President Obama was not told about the extent of the world leader surveillance programme and he never knew that the spying operations targeted American allies as well. Until this summer, briefings had been tailored to the President's priorities, such as China and Iran. However, it does not mean that – at least – his White House staff did not know about the incident. In any case, if Obama was aware, it raises serious questions about what he is doing as chief executive and leader. However, if he was not aware, it means that his own staff kept him in the dark.

“these practices are unacceptable between friends and allies”



Ukraine approaching the EU



Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich declared that Ukraine will soon fulfil all the criteria that are necessary for signing the Association Agreement with the EU. The President met with European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle in Kyiv to negotiate conditions and discuss the course of Ukraine integration to the EU. He confirmed friendly relations and the atmosphere of trust during discussion, that is definitely a positive sign and stressed that these talks are inevitable for the people, politicians and Ukrainian positive attitude towards the EU.

One of the serious obstacles standing between the EU and Ukraine has been the issue of judge's independence. However,

the draft law, coordinated with the European Council and the Venice Commission, on amendments to the Ukraine Constitution on strengthening the guarantees of this judge's independence has been adopted by the Verkhovna Rada recently. The mentioned draft law must be approved as an Ukrainian law by the majority of voters in the Constitutional Court. The President expressed his belief that final version of the draft law on public prosecution, on which Venice Commission, representatives of political parties and General Prosecutor Office had been working, will be considered by the Venice Commission very soon. He also emphasized that Ukraine went through industrial modernization of enterprises that aimed to make Ukraine more competitive.

The adoption of FTA Agreement with the EU would mean completely different conditions of relations with consumers. "We will get a huge market – 28 countries. I am sure that with this opportunity we will get better financial results. This market will be an absolutely new one in terms of the volume of sales. We have not a single reason to worsen these relations. Moreover, there is a bilateral necessity to improve them."



However, the most critical issue on the way to the EU is the case of the former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who is still being arrested for the treason. The Head of State has been very obstinate to take any actions in this regard, but at this time he promised to bring the issue to its early and adequate solution in order to get his country closer to the EU. The possible treatment of Tymoshenko abroad is considering. Yanukovich has argued that the Verkhovna Rada can come with such a law that would enable the Prime Minister's treatment abroad and he vowed to sign it.



Quo vadis, Ukraine?
Photo: vk.com

Stefan Füle said that the decision regarding the former Prime Minister must be taken within the mission of Cox-Kwasniewski. He further recognized that Ukraine is indeed on the good way to become an integral part of the European community. He said that the interaction basically needs to derive from two stepping stones. "The first is the great progress of Ukraine in fulfilling the conditions necessary for signing the Association Agreement. It brings Ukraine closer to the EU. The second is the enhancement of political dialogue with Ukraine and the expectation of developments after the Vilnius summit."

The results of the Eastern Partnership summit will also be very significant for the development of the Ukrainian foreign policy, in particular its direction. Štefan Füle expressed that he was expecting very optimistic outcomes of this summit. According to President, the Vilnius talks will summarize the development of Ukraine integration to the EU especially in last three years. Based on Ukraine objectives, Yanukovich believes to sign the Association Agreement with the EU latest in November.

“Ukraine will soon fulfil all the criteria that are necessary for signing the Association Agreement with the EU”



Greece needs third bailout

According to Klaus Regling, head of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) permanent bailout fund, Greece will be in need of a third aid package as soon as next year. Regling told German business daily *Handelsblatt* that opposed to Portugal and other eurozone countries that have performed well lately, Greece would probably not survive without another package.

“Given these circumstances, Greece will probably need another aid package” – he said in the interview. In order for the financial aid to come into effect, the plan would require the approval of the finance ministers of all 17 eurozone countries.

Greece has heretofore been voted to receive two large bailouts. The Greeks got their first aid package of €110 billion in 2010. The second bailout package was agreed to in 2012, and included a sum of €164 billion.

Experts are anything but optimistic about the current situation in Greece – the country's economy has contracted by 4.6% in the second half of 2013, and unemployment is at its all-time peak at a shocking 27.6%. Despite the fact that Greek forecasts say that recession would be over

in the country in 2014, the GDP deficit is expected to stay at 2.4% for the year to come and unemployment would still stay over 25%, making it almost impossible for Greece to manage without a third bailout.

Regling is neither the first nor the only one to warn about the high probability of an upcoming third bailout. In August, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble also predicted a third aid package to be given to Greece, and just a day after the interview with Regling, billionaire investor George Soros said in an interview with *Spiegel Online* that a much more significant part of the Greek debt should be waived, as he thinks it is obvious that Greece will never be able to pay it back.

The predominant part of the Greek debt today is held by public institutions like the IMF, the European Central Bank and other EU member states. If these debts were to be relieved, the cost would be met by taxpayers.



Clashes between supporters and opponents of Syrian president stir Tripoli

The Lebanese Army does not seem to be able to put an end to what now has been over a week-long standoff between rival groups of Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tebbaneh neighbourhoods in Tripoli, Lebanon. The death toll and the number of wounded civilians keep rising day by day.



A protester shouts slogans as others wave Syrian opposition flags during a demonstration organized by Lebanese and Syrians living in Lebanon. Photo: Freedom House [Flickr]

The tension has been up and down in the city lately. Only two months ago on 23rd August, two car bombs exploded in two different Sunni mosques, killing at least 47 people and wounding over 100. The seven arrested suspects were reportedly linked to the Jabal Mohsen-based Arab Democratic Party. Since then, Bab al-Tebbaneh militants have frequently clashed with locals from the Jabal Mohsen area. The

national army tried to enforce a security plan in the Northern part of the Lebanese capital, but only has been successful in doing so for the duration of less than a month, until the most recent fights kicked off.

The clashes began on the night of 21st October, after Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's interview was broadcasted on Al-Mayadeen TV. The Assad-backing, mostly Alevi-populated Jabal Mohsen residents started to shoot celebratory gunfire after the speech, which was followed by an exchange of heavy gunfire, sniper activity and mortar fire between Jabal Mohsen and the neighbouring anti-Assad Sunni quarter Bab al-Tebbaneh.

Over the span of 7 days, there have been reports about continuous sniper activity, targeting not only houses in the city, but also vehicles on the international highway linking Tripoli to Akkar. Residents have been advised not to use the motorway, as the sniper fire has proven to be unpredictable and seemingly random so far. Mortar bombardment and gunfire is also quasi non-stop.

Some locals managed to flee from the endangered areas, while others are afraid



to step out their doors. "We are being labelled on a sectarian basis even if we oppose strife. This is the worst thing ever," said Jabal Mohsen local Maha al-Ali. "My whole life has been in Tripoli and now I feel scared to go around the neighbourhoods although I have always refused to take any political side," she added. Many schools and workplaces across Northern Tripoli have kept closed since the start of the clashes. A considerable amount of residents simply cannot get to work and thus fail to earn the money they need to maintain their family.

Meanwhile, Salafist Sheikh Salem al-Rafi, a well-known Islamist individual in Tripoli, called upon the government to engage in

preserving security in the city. "The security plan doesn't protect us and doesn't allow us to defend ourselves," he said. Rafi also claimed that the ADP members that carried out the 23rd August attacks against the mosques were "Assad's tools," and he demanded immediate and fair legal procedure against the perpetrators. "The Arab Democratic Party should be disbanded ... and its members should be tried as some of them were charged over the Tripoli bombings," Rafi said at a news conference.

By 28th October, the dead toll has risen to at least 16 and more than 90 people have been wounded, including militants on both sides, national army troops and civilians.

Turkey accused of aiding Syrian rebels

Turkey has been accused by Syrian President Bashar Assad of harbouring "terrorists" along its border. Assad downright his Turkish counterpart that his country would pay a heavy price for backing rebels fighting against his regime. "In the near future, these terrorists will have an impact on Turkey and Turkey will pay a heavy price for it, " he said.

Turkey absolutely denies Assad's accusations, saying that it has never allowed Syrian rebels to prepare and launch attacks against the Syrian president's regime on Turkish territory. "Turkey is on the frontline of countries fighting against terrorism in the most determined fashion, " Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said at a news conference in Ankara.

Nobel Peace Prize goes to OPCW for eradicating Syrian chemical arsenal

This year's Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the UN's chemical weapons watchdog conducting the elimination of Syria's stockpiles of poison gas.

On the last day of October, less than three weeks after the award ceremony, the OPCW reported that its teams had successfully shut down all 23 chemical weapons sites across Syria, rendering each one of the production facilities inoperable. The watchdog took control over more than 1,000 metric tons of toxic agents and munitions, and now is working together with the Syrian leadership on a detailed plan of the destruction of the arsenal.



The US attitude to Iran's nuclear program more conservative than Israel's

US President Barack Obama claimed that within a year or more Iran might have enough fissile material to be capable to produce nuclear weapons. The US attitude towards Iran's nuclear program is rather more conservative in comparison with Israeli. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is determined Iran could be just even several months from having sufficient quantum of necessary material and then it would be only weeks away from constructing a nuclear bomb. The fact is that the US focused more on the time framing of production of Iranian nuclear weapons, while Israeli intelligence centralised more on Iranian capability to manufacture it.



Cover photo from the website of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran.
Photo: www.aeoi.org.ir

Iranian leader Rouhani, who is generally considered of having a more moderate policy towards Israel and the West than his predecessor, constantly assures the international community of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iranian nuclear programme and thus about the Iranian

right to lead its nuclear program. Despite this fact, Israel remains sceptical and maintains its hostile attitude to its key enemy. Obama acknowledged Israeli scepticism towards Iran and the inevitable need to prevent Iran from finishing its intentions. Netanyahu argued that if the situation might have come to the point that the national security of Israel would be endangered, then Israel would definitely take actions against Iran, even alone if necessary. He pointed out that the atmosphere between these two opposed countries has not been that tense throughout history as they had good relationships till the 1979 revolution in Iran.

Nowadays, it can be assumed that political relationship between Iran and Israel represents the most dangerous and active element threatening global peace. Netanyahu claimed that if Iran achieved to possess nuclear weapons, it would seek to destroy Israel completely, expand Islamic doctrine and dominate the world. It would mean a "nuclear terrorism galore". On the other side he argued he would definitely prefer solution of this situation by diplomatic means, without using military power. Israeli main goal in this regard is to make Iran dismantle its nuclear facilities and remove enriched uranium from its direct impact.



Therefore Netanyahu has recently visited the US and lobbied the international community in his speech at the UN General Assembly to convince about the seriousness of the situation and about the fact that Iranian nuclear program is a threat to global peace and security. Israel calls the international community to apply sanctions on Iran, that cannot be ease, and continuously appeal for the complete dismantling of Iranian nuclear program. "As the Iranian president is talking nicely to you, they're developing the weapons and the vehicles to strike the United States. They have to stop that. They have to dismantle their program, dismantle their nuclear weapons program. Now, that's not what they're offering. They're offering something entirely different. And I don't think we should be hoodwinked."

He also emphasized that the dismantling has to be complete, not only partial.



The flag of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran

the burial. Subsequently, in the Diyala province, five Shiite people were killed by a car bomb situated in a marketplace. There have also been several attacks on Sunni as well as Shiite mosques. At the beginning of September, a Sunni mosque in the Umm al-Adham village near Baqouba was violently attacked. The slaughter caused by a bomb installed inside an air conditioner left 33 worshippers dead, while 45 others were wounded.

Iraqi government has attempted to stop the insurgencies by carrying out various crackdowns against aggressive militants, but until now it has not managed to moderate the savage situation.

US government shutdown influencing essentially the implementation of sanctions on Iran

The United States is facing a difficult situation in the form of the government shutdown after the Congress failed to agree a budget. This fact vigorously affected the enforcement of the implication of sanctions on Iran, as officers whose work is to monitor sanctions did not attend their offices because of travel restrictions.

“within a year or more Iran might have enough fissile material to be capable to produce nuclear weapons”



Egypt's celebrations of 1973 attack on Israel finish in bloody confrontation

Egyptian civilians have again been suffering from extremely violent clashes between opponents and supporters of ousted Egyptian president Mohamad Mursi. The security situation in Egypt is very fragile since president's overthrow in July and the seizure of power by military. The supporters of Mursi, who was overthrown on July 3 because of people's increasing discontent with his rule, consist of an alliance including the oldest and most influential Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood. On the other side, the president's greatest opponent is the Egyptian army, which deprived him of political power.

In August, military authorities ousted two pro-Mursi representatives in Cairo and consequently declared a state of emergency. The chief of Egyptian army Sisi guaranteed that he will lead the country to free and fair elections and thus also political and security balance. The Muslim Brotherhood however refused to accept the newly established military authorities and accused Sisi of threatening democracy by ousting the first freely-

elected president and illegitimately seizing the power.



Abdel Fatah Said Al-Sisi. Photo: US Secretary of Defence [Flickr]

Deadly protests have started on the occasion of celebrations of 1973 attack on Israel. These celebrations, which were supposed to unite Egyptian people, at last caused their disposal. Mursi's Muslim Brotherhood urged Egyptians to gather in Cairo on Tahrir Square that was a rallying point and demonstrate against military-backed government. Thousands of



members of Islamist group reached Tahrir Square and attacked the security forces that accompanied the celebrations and were assuming the conflict to come. Police members attempted to keep the rioters in a safe distance from celebrations and responded with tear gas and firing into the air not only in Cairo, but also in Alexandria. Aggressive demonstrators were using bottles, fireworks, grenades and other means and were throwing them to police.



*One of the protestors waving the Egyptian Flag during the 2011 protests in Tahrir Square, Cairo.
Photo: Jonathan Rashed [Flickr]*

They chanted slogans like: “The coup is terrorism” or “Sisi is a killer”.

Egyptian authorities had claimed one day before the clashes that all demonstrators against the military forces during celebrations would be arrested and considered dangerous agents of foreign powers. According to relevant sources, at least 51 people were killed and thousands more seriously wounded in clashes in Egyptian cities, the most of them in capital. Moreover, 423 people were arrested. Egyptian authorities has identified the Muslim Brotherhood as the main culprit and designated the bloody conflict as an attempt to “ruin the celebrations and cause friction with the masses”.

There are justified fears that the insurgencies made by Islamist groups will still increase as also attacks by militants on police and soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula have become regular and more intense.

Obama decided to cut off military aid to Egypt

The United States decided not to support Egyptian army and suspended military aid to Egypt. This act is an American respond to the overthrow of democratically elected Egyptian president. Obama aims to maintain political relationship with Egypt and refused to designate July's circumstances as a coup because otherwise he would have to suspend all the aid to Egypt, except from humanitarian.

“the security situation in Egypt is very fragile since president's overthrow in July”



Turkish-Japanese ties warm as following Abe's visit to Ankara

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's three-day trip to Turkey in late October resulted in what Abe is hoping to be a huge improvement in the already friendly Turkish-Japanese relationship. In his talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Abe aimed to establish closer economic cooperation between the two countries by introducing a possible bilateral free trade agreement and the export of Japanese nuclear technology.

Abe's trip to Ankara was also scheduled for this particular date because 29th October is the Republic day of Turkey and it was set to be the day of the opening ceremony of the Marmaray tunnel, a joint Turkish-Japanese project dating back to 1999. The contractor of the 13.6-kilometer tunnel, which connects the Asian and European sides of Istanbul via a tunnel passing under the Bosphorus, is a Japanese-Turkish consortium, TGN, which consists of Japanese Taisei and its Turkish partners, Nurol and Gama. Almost one third of the realization costs were provided by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation. In a written interview during his trip, Abe said he hoped that the project would be "the new symbol of the two countries'

friendship." He added that Japanese firms were looking forward to take part in future projects that the Turkish government plans to develop in the near future. Abe also expressed his wish for "Japanese-Turkish businesses' cooperation to be extended into investments in third countries, such as Iraq."

On the second day of Abe's visit, the Turkish government and a consortium of Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. and France's Areva, SA signed an agreement based on which Japan is to export its nuclear technology by constructing four reactors in Sinop on the Black Sea coast of Turkey. The accord followed a similar one that was signed during Abe's last trip to Turkey in May, when Mitsubishi Ltd. established cooperation with also France-based GDF Suez about building Turkey's second nuclear power plant. The cornerstone of the nuclear agreement between the two countries was also set in May when the two sides signed an accord for the peaceful use of atomic power. Exporting nuclear reactors is a key element of the Japanese prime minister's growth strategy.



Vladimir Putin is getting into the centre of international attention

Owing to Moscow's recent engagement in international politics, Vladimir Putin seems to attract more attention than ever before. In the end of October the American Forbes magazine named the Russian leader as the most powerful person in the world, overtaking such important individuals as Angela

Merkel, the Pope, Bill Gates, or the previous winner, Barack Obama. Since the creation of the ranking in 2009 – except for 2010 – Obama was always the first one. Other Russians also take place on the list, and not only billionaire businessmen, but even Dmitry Medvedev, former president of the Russian Federation.

Forbes uses four criteria to determine the most powerful leaders: how many they govern, how much money they oversee, how many spheres of influence they tout, and how actively they use their power to influence to change the world. Based on these criteria, in 2012 Putin got the third place. Experts say that such a leap can be the consequence of basically two recent events. The first one is the strong position of Moscow in the Snowden case against the US surveillance programme, when in spite of the American claim the ex-CIA employee got asylum in Russia. The second is said to be the mediatory role that Moscow played in the Syrian conflict. Both of them were victories against Obama's politics; this is what can explain the dynamics in the ranking- Obama backward, Putin forward.



Vladimir Putin



As another part of the success, Russian activists and lawmakers nominated Putin to the Nobel Peace Prize. Their main argument is that without Putin Obama would have launched a violent intervention against Syria that could have led to a bigger conflict with a lot of victims, causing humanitarian catastrophe. The prize was won by Obama in 2009 but according to the latest events like the Syrian conflict, the international audience would not associate him with peace at all at the moment.

Putin would not be the first Russian politician to get the Nobel Peace Prize, Mikhail Gorbachev won it in 1990 “for his leading role in the peace process which today characterizes important parts of the international community.” The Nobel



Vladimir Putin. Photo: Presidential Press and Information Office

Committee has not commented on the rumours and on the nomination of Vladimir Putin, but even if he gets on the list, it will take a few months for the publicity to know about it- as the process of selection is secret and confidential.

The EU against Moscow's human rights policy

Putin's human rights policy is hardly criticised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and some lawmakers, who are planning to make a common resolution. What really annoys them is Moscow's attitude and regulations towards anti-governmental internet speech, protesters, NGOs and homosexuals. They also note that the politically motivated “justice” is too frequent in Russia that makes impossible to enforce the freedom of speech and the political plurality in the country. The PACE calls Russia to stop exercise influence on their own juridical system as soon as possible that – as a first step – can give a better chance for these rights.

“Vladimir Putin seems to attract more attention than ever before”



Closer ties are to be built between Russia and India

On a meeting in Moscow India's external affairs minister Salman Khurshid accentuated that India's growing cooperation with the USA can not affect the long, strong and historical relations with Russia. He arrived there after a visit to the US.

Concerning the closer military partnership with Washington he assured Russia that she will always have a privileged role in this position and a special strategic cooperation could be built up between them. This collaboration would be extended later to economy and education as well. As a response, Moscow assured India that it would push its full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Salman Khurshid with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov stated that nothing can happen in the world that could take apart the two countries.

The two ministers on the Moscow visit also prepared another meeting to examine specific issues and to make a joint statement. This statement was published on 21 October during the 14th India-Russian Annual Summit with the aim of deepening the strategic partnership for global peace and stability.

First of all, both sides highly welcomed the measures for strengthening the relations between the two countries that were taken this year. Previously they met several times and performed even more discussions for making contracts.

They are both satisfied with the trade and investment ties they have recently built and acknowledged their mutual desire to strengthen bilateral cooperation in areas like aviation, chemical and fertilizer industry, mining and fabrication of automobiles. They have already set up several working groups and commissions to improve the cooperation and would like to continue the effective work in the future as well.

They also made statements about the cooperation in the areas of energy industry, science, technology, education, culture, inter-regional collaboration, exploration of outer space, military and technology. They would like to fight together against terrorism, for the disarmament with non-proliferation, and for sustainable development. Enhancing security cooperation in Asia and the Asia Pacific was also set as a priority. These steps taken together can strengthen the relations between Russia and India in the next few years more than in the last decades.



There are two important partners for India

During the Moscow meeting India's Prime Minister Manmohad Singh failed to strike a nuclear power deal with Russia – while there were many other measures taken in the joint statement. This can be one of his last visits in this position abroad as the general elections are coming in 2014 in India. He finds the relations with Russia essential; this is why he takes even the last chances to visit them. The other country he would like to strengthen India's relations with is China; therefore it will be his next destination in 2013.

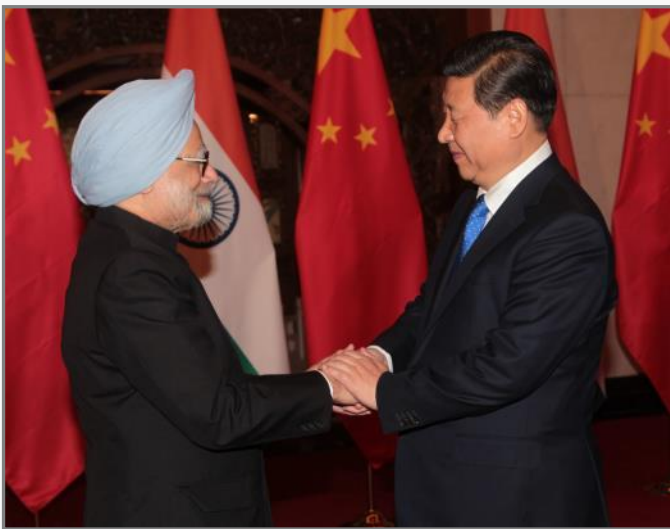


Sergey Lavrov Russian Foreign Minister with his Indian counterpart, Salman Khurshid. Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

“nothing can happen in the world that could take apart the two countries”



China and India to ensure peace together



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh meeting the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, in Beijing, China on October 23, 2013. Photo: Prime Minister's Office, India

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang accepted an agreement in the end of October in Beijing, by which they are trying to make efforts for bringing to the end their conflict over disputed borders near the Himalayas. The conflict between the two countries has been lasting for decades. The current agreement can mean a historical step in the relations of the two countries that want political security for their rapidly developing economy.

Both countries think that the other one has been occupying a part of their territory. China claims more than 90,000 square

kilometres, while India says that 38,000 square kilometres of its territory officially belongs to China. All in all, it means a 4,000 kilometre-long borderline. Politicians assume that this animosity can lead to serious consequences- as it happened many years ago; in 1962 the tensions burst out in a war that almost definitively destroyed the mutual trust between India and China.

Now their aim is to fight against this mistrust that has been characterising their relations for ages. For reaching it they have taken several measures and tried to organise the already existing ones into a viable system. They will keep under control the disputed



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visits the Forbidden City, in Beijing, China with the Premier of the People's Republic of China, Li Keqiang, on October 23, 2013. Photo: Prime Minister's Office, India



areas to make sure that no more conflict can evolve there in the future. For this they would like to set up a patrolling system, ensuring the presence of authorities.

After such a long non-peaceful period a more liveable one can come to the two countries that help their further political, economic and financial development.

India worries over the new Chinese-Pakistani trade

China is on the way to sell two more nuclear reactors to Pakistan. India has already expressed her worries over the trade, saying that it can mean a direct threat to India's national security. Later Washington also declared its objection against the deal. Considering the deepened relations between China and India the decision seems even more unrealistic, but Beijing says it is just a part of a really important civilian cooperation with Pakistan and it has nothing to do with military collaboration. If they realise the deal in spite of the disapprovals, the new high-tech atomic reactors will take place in the Pakistani capital Karachi and China can gain approximately 9.6 billion dollars.

China is planning to cooperate with Myanmar

China welcomes the political changes and the civil reconciliation process in Myanmar. Beijing is planning to become a more important partner for the country, helping to sustain the security of their common border line while cooperating in various areas. Myanmar is thankful for the support that she got from Beijing and hopes that more bilateral agreements can be set up. All these measures would help to build mutual trust and to avoid borderline conflicts. Their relations have been peaceful since 1950, when diplomatic ties were established. After the new steps these relations are likely to get even deeper.

“their aim is to fight against the mistrust that has been characterising their relations for ages”



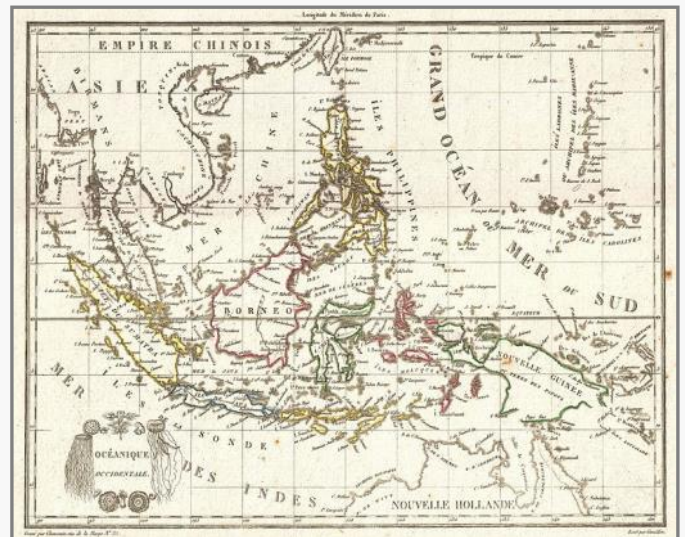
Summits in the Asia-Pacific region marked by the US president's absence

At the beginning of October, the Asia-Pacific region hosting APEC, ASEAN and EAS summits had become a centre of interest for the world politics. The 25th APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit took place in Indonesia, Bali on 7-8 October and aimed to discuss the problematic of economic integration. Consequently, the 8th EAS (East Asia Summit) and 23rd ASEAN summit (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) were held on the 9-10 October in Brunei and their central objective was to deal with political development in the region.

The efficiency of the outcome of summits was negatively affected by the absence of the US President Barack Obama whose attendance was highly anticipated and welcomed by Asian partners. In the middle of September, the President's participation on APEC, ASEAN and EAS summits, as well as his diplomatic visits to the Philippines and Malaysia were officially confirmed by the US Government. He was however unable to take part on these significant events in the Asia-Pacific region because of the US Government partial shutdown.

US Secretary of State John Kerry, who was joined by the US Trade Representative Michael Froman and Commerce Secretary

Penny Pritzker, was nominated to replace Obama on the summits. Kerry also substituted Obama in his visit to Malaysia, on the other hand, he was however forced to cancel his visit to the Philippines due to the worsening critical situation because of the quickly approaching typhoon.



The US political impact has been constantly strong in the Asia-Pacific region but it has even more strengthened recently. On the summits, Obama planned to highlight and discuss particular issues within US national interests, as well as "other issues of regional and global scale". The central questions belonging to the first mentioned group should have been economic cooperation between the US and Asia-Pacific countries,



maritime security in this region. Regarding the “other issues”, in 2010, the US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton declared the solution of territorial conflicts in the South China Sea as the US national intention.

This US interest has been a part of the US strategy in Asian region that has aimed to strengthen alliances between the US and East Asian states and establish new coalitions in the form of a Trans-Pacific Partnership where the Americans would play a key role. The US political intentions should have been discussed in particular at the APEC Summit, which has been losing its relevance and integrative capability. Americans intended to convince countries in the Southeast Asian region that they can still count on the US support in their confrontation with China over territorial disputes regarding islands in the South China Sea. However, Obama’s withdrawal from the talks has raised many concerns and made members of the organizations questioning the US support.

According to relevant researchers, China will probably attempt to take advantage of the situation during upcoming talks in order to weaken the White House role in the



23rd ASEAN summit. ASEAN leaders gathering before summit. Photo: thesunday.my

region. “Chinese policymakers have been gradually dropping their characteristic harsh rhetoric of previous years against many countries in East and Southeast Asia – replacing it with the ‘soft threats’ of the resurgent Chinese economy. And then Obama provided an excellent opportunity to Beijing.”

It is obvious that the foreign policy of targeted Asian states will be influenced by Chinese economic manipulation and by its attempts to reassure states in the region that China remains the most significant actor in the ASEAN integration process. Chinese President has already promised to almost triple the volume of Sino-Malaysian trade by 2017.

“efficiency of the outcome of summits was negatively affected by the absence of the US President Barack Obama”



Nuclear reactor restarted in North Korea

South Korea's Intelligence Service reported on 8 October that North Korea reactivated one of its nuclear reactors. The Yongbyon complex was originally closed in 2007 and now is capable of producing enough plutonium for one atomic bomb per year. As experts say this reactor –while boosting North's nuclear capabilities- can be used in future talks as a basis of negotiation and bargaining with Western countries and with South Korea.

Pyongyang declared its intent to restart the nuclear reactor when it disabled a multilateral agreement with five other countries: with South Korea, the USA, China, Japan and Russia. At the same time North announced its adoption of a programme called “parallel economic and nuclear development”.

The suspicion of restarting the facility comes from different observations taken by the USA. Their satellite photos showed that from 19 September hot waste water had been streamed into the river nearby. It is known that a lot of hot water and steam is needed to effectively operate a nuclear reactor.

Meanwhile the cooperation is getting stronger between South Korea and the

United States as a reaction to the North Korean threat. US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel on an annual meeting with his Korean counterpart noted that a new agreement is needed between the two countries for a new method to coordinate their mutual efforts. And this is not only because of the previous defence treaty, but of the common position that the behaviour of North Korea can be a huge threat for the regional and for the global security and peace as well.



Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center 5 MWe experimental Magnox reactor, North Korea. Photo: Keith Luse, Senior Professional Staff Member, U.S. Senate

Also on 8 October North Korea's Korean People's Army called the United States to cancel its planned joint naval exercise with



Seoul. It was a reaction to the moving of US navy ships into the South Korean Busan port on 4 October. Pyongyang took the joint action as an intent to put pressure on them. It warned the US of “disastrous” consequences if they keep cooperating in such way, noting that Washington would be fully accountable for the possible outcomes.

South Korea's president Park Geun-hye also held talks with Washington representative John Kerry on a regional forum in Brunei in October. Apart from regional and global issues they mentioned the nuclear threat of the North; they see Pyongyang's action as a try to restart the multilateral aid-for-denuclearisation talks.



Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center, North Korea - Fuel fabrication facility. Photo: Keith Luse, Senior Professional Staff Member, U.S. Senate

There are other signs that indicate North's unwillingness towards reconciliation: it postponed the reunion of separated families – that formed an important part of the negotiation process between the two Koreas. As it seems, the conflict is not likely to be solved in the near future.

Korea will not take part in the US missile system

On 15 October such rumours arose in the international media that Seoul had been planning to join the US missile defence system by adopting their weapons to protect the country from the Northern threat. A few days later Kim Kwan-jin, Minister of National Defence of South Korea officially denied these news. He admitted that they need a new system, but based on the basic geographical differences between South Korea and the US the same system cannot be adopted. Kim Kwan-jin accentuated that they are planning to pursue its own Korean Air and Missile Defence (KAMD) system. He added that it is becoming urgent to build up the defence, so they will be concentrating their power on it in the near future.

China against North Korean steps

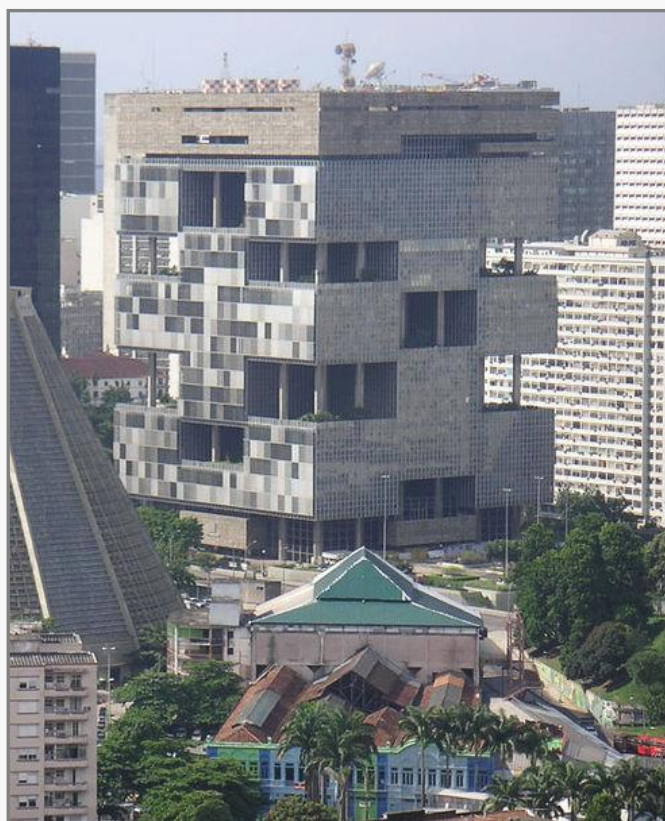
Chinese worries over North Korea's recent measures are getting more and more significant. A retired Chinese general, Wang Hongguang expressed his views concerning the issue in a criticism, in which he accentuates that North Korea's steps has put in danger China many times during the history. He also mentioned the reopening of Yongbyon reactor – that seems to worsen the situation – noting that Pyongyang cannot let it be a direct danger to China's national territory. They encourage the denuclearisation of the peninsula; to achieve this goal they banned the export of several goods that could be used for military purposes. On the ban list we can find 900 items that can help to stop the realisation of Northern intentions.



Brazil facing mass demonstrations, some of them turning violent

Largest and most populated Brazilian cities, especially Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo have been facing a series of mass demonstrations with thousands of people on the streets calling for better social services, taking measures against corruption or cutting off enormous state money spending on upcoming sport events.

The series of protests have started already in June and still continue, more of them turning even to dangerously violent. The first violent demonstration happened at the beginning of October and began firstly as a peaceful march in Rio de Janeiro where thousands of people took to the streets to support protesting teachers. Brazilian teachers have already been on strike for better pay conditions for two months. Most of protesters gathered in front of the City Hall where MPs have recently passed a new law that brought considerable changes to teacher's pay and working hours, making their living situation worse. Teachers were joined by many civilians including students and civil society groups. Some of the sources even claimed that 50,000 people came to support protesting teachers, but the police confirmed a much



*The Headquarters of Petrobras in downtown Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
Photo: thomas_hobbs [Flickr]*

smaller number of supporters. Among calm demonstrators also various anarchist groups participated on a strike, including the so-called Black Blocs, with the aim to seize the opportunity to provoke a conflict.

The chaos broke out when masked and armed extremist started to throw grenades, tear gas, fireworks, bottles and furniture at



police and were seeking to demolish the City Hall gate. They further attacked few shops, torched a public transportation bus, tried to smash up and fire cashpoints and break to banks. Thus the march accompanied by police troops swiftly turned to a violent demonstration that had to be suppressed by the police that responded with tear gas. Similar situation played out during the protest in Sao Paulo near to a governor's palace, where members of the same extremist group attacked the police violently. Police troops had to intervene also against the activists called Roofless that sought to break in the city council building. Few days later, demonstrations in Sao Paulo resulted tragically, when police accidentally shot dead a student taking part in protests calling for free public transport for students. After that, that march became violent and according to police, some of the rioters even used firearms. The police had to respond with tear gas again.

Another calm strike that turned to a violent demonstration in which five people were hurt was launched in Rio de Janeiro, but for different reasons as social issues. Union workers gathered and demonstrated against the participation of foreign



Police using teargas in a demonstration during summer 2013. Photo: Marcelo Calvet

companies in state-run bid of Brazilian oil company. Oil companies including Brazilian Petrobras and four foreign firms successfully gained the possibility to develop an offshore field. About 200 demonstrators were attempting to attack the hotel in which the negotiations were taking place. More than 1,000 police members were called to moderate the situation. The police sought to calm the protesters but at last needed to react with tear gas and rubber-coated steel bullets. The Brazilian government was satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations considering it success.

The security situation in Brazil is in particular serious and challenging as the country will shortly host high level sport events as the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games.

“the series of protests have started already in June and still continue”



Venezuela and Paraguay to restore diplomatic relations

Venezuelan and Paraguayan ministers of foreign affairs engaged to re-establish full diplomatic relations between their countries at a meeting in Asunción, Paraguay. As a first step of the reconciliation process, Elías Jaua and Eladio Loizaga have engaged to exchange ambassadors and create a bi-national business committee in order to rebuild economic and trade relations as well.

Hostility of the two states started in July 2012 with the withdrawal of Paraguay's ambassador from Venezuela and the declaration of Venezuela's envoy to Asunción as "persona non grata". The government referred to "serious evidence of intervention [...] in the internal affairs of the Republic of Paraguay" by Venezuelan officials. The accusations were based on videos – released by Paraguay's Defence Minister, Maria Liz Garcia – in which then Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicolas Maduro and Ecuadorian Ambassador, Julio Prado had encouraged high ranking figures in the Paraguayan military to remain loyal to former President, Fernando Lugo after his impeachment. Naturally, the Venezuelan government denied all allegations claiming that the video were "totally edited, distorted". According to official statements, Maduro was in Paraguay as part of a 12-member

UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) delegation and he only tried to mediate in the country's political crisis before Lugo's dismissal. Outside Venezuela, the move have been considered as "institutional coup" by many Latin American states which is why Paraguay has been temporarily suspended from the Mercosur and the UNASUR trade blocs as well.

A meeting in September this year, organised by Brazilian President, Dilma Rousseff was the first bilateral conversation between the two state's leaders. Then, Nicolas Maduro apologised to his Paraguayan counterpart, Horacio Cartes for any "pain caused" over the incident last year. In response to this gesture, Cartes publicly thanked him for his "willingness to repair any error, pain or injury that he might have caused to the Paraguayan people".

Elías Jaua and Eladio Loizaga, ministers of foreign affairs of Venezuela and Paraguay also agreed on starting new phase of cooperation in the field of economy, agriculture and energy projects. As Jaua said: "We come full of political willingness to reconnect with our brothers in Paraguay and with their government to fully normalise relations between countries."

Earlier this year, during its yearly summit held in Suriname, Paraguay was officially reinstated to the UNASUR as well.



Three top US diplomats expelled from Venezuela by Head of State after conspiracy accusations

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro ordered an expulsion of three US diplomats from Venezuela because of the alleged conspiracy attempts planned with the “extreme right” opposition. The expelled US diplomats were chargé d'affaires Kelly Keiderling and two embassy officials Elizabeth Hunderland, who works at the political section of the embassy and consular officer David Mutt.



Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of Venezuela

The Venezuelan President argued during his speech at the televised political event that recent activities of the US diplomats were carefully monitored by Venezuelan government and declared to have a clear evidence of the US conspiratorial activities. At that time he however did not provide detailed information about the case. Later on he accused diplomatic officials of “meeting with the extreme Venezuela right

to finance actions to sabotage the electricity system and the Venezuelan economy.”

He has already previously associated the opposition with repeating blackouts and shortages of some food articles in the country. Maduro called opposition activities as attempts to stain the ruling government and harm the economy with the aim to overall destabilise the country. The US embassy employees were given 48 hours to leave the country.

The President advocated his order with the fact that he managed to eliminate dangerous elements attempting to destabilise the state. Maduro called the Americans Yankees and imperialists and threatened with the open political and diplomatic confrontation against the US. “Get out of Venezuela. Yankee go home. Enough of abuses against the dignity of a homeland that wants peace.”

The White House responded by the complete rejection of Venezuelan allegations calling them unfounded and stated that the US State Department has not yet received any official decision from Venezuela to expel US members of diplomatic corps.



Later that day the Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Jaua stated to have sent a protest note to the US Secretary of State John Kerry. The Venezuelan state TV later broadcasted pictures and videos showing three expelled US diplomats in Bolivar and Amazonas and visiting Sumate that is an electoral-monitoring group that was engaged in the organization of the failed recall vote in 2004 against Hugo Chavez. Jaua therefore accused the US diplomats of planning the sabotage of national elections for mayors and city councils from December. The US embassy defended itself arguing that the mentioned trip was an ordinary diplomatic visit. Consequently, Henrique Capriles, the Venezuelan opposition leader called the dispute as Maduro's attempt to divert public attention from the real problems of the state, especially from the fact that Maduro cannot effectively rule the country. Capriles also added that election in April in which Maduro won, was definitely corrupted.

The US-Venezuela political and diplomatic relations have been at the freezing point since 2002, when the former Venezuelan



leader Hugo Chavez, who governed the country for 14 years, accused the US of supporting the failed attempt to oust him. In 2010, he refused to accept a new US ambassador and since then, the confronting countries have not had diplomatic representation on the highest level. The latest case of expelling US diplomats from Venezuela was not the only one. The US diplomatic employees were last time evicted from the Latin American country on March 5. Venezuelan President has recently accused Obama Administration also of the planned plot against his attendance at the UN General Assembly that he was forced to cancel.

“Maduro threatened with open political and diplomatic confrontation against the US”



■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Appeals court bans Berlusconi from politics for 2 years

■ The Supreme Court in Italy ordered a Milan Appeals Court to decide over the length of the Silvio Berlusconi's political ban because of his tax fraud conviction. Silvio Berlusconi got a political ban for two years. Overall it is one of two political ban processes when Berlusconi lost his final appeal in August over his tax fraud conviction and a four-year jail sentence. The process will probably be long-termed as the mentioned political bans need to be approved by Parliament. It is clear that the two-year political ban will avoid Berlusconi from taking part in the coming election. Relating to the four-year jail sentence, based on Berlusconi's request, he will perform community service instead of doing jail for the tax fraud. Moreover, the four-year term has been markedly reduced to one year under an amnesty for crimes committed before 2006.

Azerbaijani presidential election results known before voting even started

■ Azerbaijani presidential election held at the beginning of October was accompanied by an immense political scandal on a national level. The election results showing President Ilham Aliyev winning was released by the Electoral Commission one whole day before the election had even started. The electoral results were pushed out on an official smartphone app run by the Central Election Commission. The results showed current President getting 72.76 % that was not factually possible as only about 15,000 votes had been cast at that time. Azerbaijani authorities firstly defended themselves that the app's developer had accidentally released results from the 2008 Presidential election. The officials later came with an argument that the results had only been partial. In any case, the re-elected President is blamed of having been predeterminedly elected.

No to oath, yes to headscarf in Turkey

■ Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced several reforms this month, concerning culture, education, and changes in the political and law system of the country. The package includes two highly important steps that had been in the centre of attention for years. The first one is a measure that abolished the requirement of recitation of the Turkish pledge of allegiance in primary schools. The second one invalidates the previous headscarf ban in public sector workplaces – even though it is still forbidden to wear it for judges, prosecutors, and for military personnel. National attitudes are different; some say that it can help Turkey to move towards a more civilized and democratic state, while others consider the oath-command anti-national.



Bombs damage Swedish consulate in Tripoli after kidnappers release Libyan PM

■ Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan claims his kidnappers that briefly held him captive on 10th October before releasing him only a few hours later planned his kidnapping to be a part of a coup attempt organized by his opponents in the parliament.

Just hours before he spoke, several car bombs exploded in front of the Swedish consulate and a mosque in Benghazi. While the latter hit a preacher in front of the mosque, no one got hurt at the consulate as it is always closed on Fridays.

The bombings and the fact that gunmen are able to easily abduct the leader of the country show how deep the chaos is in Libya only two years after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi. Islamist protesters against the incumbent PM keep calling Zeidan a “US agent”, and they demand the country to be ruled by Islamic law.

Russian embassy in Libya attacked, diplomats evacuated

■ Unidentified armed people attacked the Russian embassy in the Libyan capital, Tripoli. The attackers invaded the diplomatic building, seeking to get inside and tore off the Russian national flag. No Russian diplomats were hurt as the attack was committed in the evening. The situation got under control soon, however, the threat of attack remained. To avoid members of the Russian “corps diplomatique” from getting into dangerous situation, the Russian government decided to evacuate its employees next day from the country.

Gunmen open fire on Coptic Christian wedding in Cairo

■ Three people died and at least nine others were wounded when unidentified gunmen on motorcycles fired randomly at a wedding party that was leaving a Coptic Christian church in Cairo, Egypt. The attackers shot indiscriminately at the mass, instantly killing a man an eight-year-old girl, and fatally wounding a woman who later died on the way to the hospital.

The national army's overthrow of President Mohammed Morsi in July has triggered harsh attacks against the Christian community in Egypt by Islamists who claim that the Church supported the army in bringing down Morsi. Several Christians have been killed and Coptic Pope Tawadros II has received multiple death threats since July.

Suicide bomber kills eight at Pakistani-Afghan border

■ On Wednesday 2nd October, eight people were killed and 16 were wounded in a suicide bomb attack at the south-western Chaman border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Officials confirmed that the massacre was caused by a suicide bomber, claiming that they found the severed head of the attacker on the blast site. Border force commander Colonel Haider Ali said the bomber came from the Afghan side of the border. The border crossing point in Chaman serves as an important part of one of the two main transfer routes providing supplies for American and NATO troops fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan.



Pakistani Taliban leader claims to be open for peace talks

■ Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leader Hakimullah Mehsud said in an interview with the BBC that he was ready for peace talks with the government of Pakistan. Mehsud added that the talks have not begun yet because the Pakistani government has been constantly delaying them. “We believe in serious talks but the government has taken no steps to approach us” – he said.

The reason for the government's hesitation is the fact that they blame the TTP for recent attacks in the country. Mehsud, who has a \$5m bounty on his head, also highlighted that US drone strikes should be stopped immediately, as they keep setting back the peace talks too. He thinks the US influence over the Pakistani leadership is not beneficial for the country, which needs to settle its own issues.

Bangladeshi lawmaker sentenced to death by hanging due to commitment of 9 war crimes

■ The International Crimes Tribunal in Dhaka sentenced to death Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, a leader of the main opposition political party in Bangladesh. The MP was found guilty of nine serious war crimes committed during the 1971 war of independence. During the war, Bangladeshi independence supporters fought against Pakistani troops that were helped by local traitors. The court determined to deprive Chowdhury of life by hanging. Immediately after verdict, the MP pointed out that the government impacted the court's decision, as the copy of the verdict had been available on the Internet already one day before.

Myanmar releases political prisoners

■ Myanmar set free some of its political prisoners as the country vowed to release all of them by the end of the year. It is the beginning of a longer process; total 56 prisoners' penalty will come to an end in the near future. Since 2011, when Thein Sein came to power it became a priority to free political detainees of the previous regime. But some say it is just a symbolical step that helps Sein to set up better relations with the Western countries. According to their information there are at least twice as many people in prison and other 50 people were detained by the new regime. Nevertheless, the international community highly welcomed the measure.



*Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
Photo: Chatham House*



Thousands march in Cambodian opposition protest

■ Some 15,000 protesters gathered on the streets of Phnom Penh, Cambodia in what turned out to be a three-day rally, raising voice against what they say was a rigged election that resulted in the re-election of Prime Minister Hun Sen back in July. Supporters of the opposition delivered to the United Nations a petition thumb-printed by a reported amount of approximately 2 million supporters.

Official election results extended PM Hun Sen's 28-year rule and provided his party a narrow 68-to-55 seat majority over the opposition's Cambodia National Rescue Party in the parliament. CNRP vowed to boycott the new Parliament until the government has met its demands.



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen

Nuclear leak in Fukushima

■ On 11 October Japanese officials announced that on the previous day high radiation levels were detected in Fukushima 1. Near the suspicious water storages high levels were recorded also in September this year. At this time there was no proof that it caused any main changes in the local sea level, so they did not take it as a real threat. But the heavy rains in late October caused a radioactive water leak probably into the sea. This radiation is said to be harmful for the health, especially in the terms of cancer risks. The danger is even higher considering the approaching typhoon.



Reactor control room at Fukushima. Photo: KawamotoTakuo



■ News in Brief

Bilateral relations

Hezbollah withdraws some of its troops from Syria

■ Lebanese guerrilla group Hezbollah has reportedly begun withdrawing some of its fighters that had been aiding President Bashar al-Assad's troops against Syrian rebels. The Shiite Hezbollah is said to be scaling down its presence in Syria after receiving pressure from the Lebanese government and from hard-line Sunni groups in Lebanon that have repeatedly warned Hezbollah over its involvement in the Syrian civil war.

Hezbollah denies any political pressure to be the direct cause of its decision, claiming that the real reason behind the withdrawal was merely tactical. According to *The Times*, Hezbollah, which earlier had over 10,000 fighters in Syria, has left only a few thousand soldiers in the civil war-ravaged country.

Israel releases another 26 Palestinian prisoners

■ After letting out 26 Palestinian political prisoners in August, Israel released the second wave of long-serving inmates on 29th October. The prisoners were transported by bus from jail at midnight to welcoming parties in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli goodwill gesture is to help the long-time rivals engage in peace talks awaited (and opposed) by many on both sides.

Israel promised to free 104 of its Palestinian prisoners in four stages. The procedure was set in motion by US peace-making pressure – Secretary of State John Kerry set a 9-month framework for the negotiations.

Francois Hollande is no more welcomed in the Jewish Knesset

■ Israeli government speaker Yuli Edelstein declared French president Francois Hollande persona non grata in the Jewish Knesset. He explained the decision with Hollande's cancellation of visiting the Knesset, taking it as a disrespectful and humiliating step towards Israel. Without any explanation, the president will speak to university students instead. Israel's answer was quite intense, they will not invite to any official event even the new French ambassador Patrick Maisonnave. French officials do not understand the sharp reaction; they are trying to find the best date for the president's visit in the Knesset as soon as possible.



■ News in Brief

International relations

Al-Qaeda leader captured in US anti-terrorist operation

■ Over the weekend of 5-6th October, US military forces targeted two high-value targets in Africa. In Southern Somalia, US Navy SEALs went after the top leader of al Shabaab, the militant group responsible for the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, Kenya in September. During the operation the SEALs got under heavy enemy fire and had to withdraw before they could verify whether they killed their target.

Meanwhile, during an other operation 3,000 miles away, US forces managed to capture Abu Anas al Libi, a wanted al Qaeda leader who is allegedly responsible for the 1998 bombings of two US embassies in Africa. The supposedly coordinated, partly successful operations indicate Washington's willingness and capability to pursue and hunt down suspected terrorists.

Pentagon's new strategy aims to train Africans to combat terrorism

■ The US Pentagon has launched a new army strategy that intends to train African forces to be more effective in fighting against terroristic groups. The primary objective of the strategy is to train and advise African troops to tackle security threats without the presence of American armed forces. President Obama on this regard claimed African continent is one of the regions where dangerous armed groups gather the most and plan terrorist attacks. That is the main reason why the US has firstly focused on the African continent. The brigades of American soldiers will however likely extend also to other regions next year, in particular to Europe or Latin America.

Gambian despot decides to withdraw from the British Commonwealth

■ Gambian President Yahya Jammeh unexpectedly determined to withdraw his West African country from the Commonwealth of Nations. He thus was the first leader determining so since Zimbabwe's withdrawal in 2003. The controversial President justified his decision by the claim that "Gambia will never be a member of any neo-colonial institution and will never be a party to any institution that represents an extension of colonialism." The withdrawal came just six weeks before the start of a biennial summit in Sri Lanka on 16th November.



UN General Assembly elected 5 new temporary members to UN Security Council

■ The UN Security Council situated in NY is one of the six most relevant organs of the United Nations. It has altogether 15 members, from which 5 are permanent with a veto-wielding power. These include the US, the UK, France, Russian Federation and China. The rest are non-permanent members that are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. Recently elected 5 new temporary members are Saudi Arabia, Chad, Nigeria, Chile and Lithuania with the last two getting the majority of votes. The rightness of the election of Chad, Nigeria and Saudi was questioned by human rights groups as these countries have grievous records on human rights. Particularly Saudi Arabia has been called to improve its records on women's rights. The Human Rights Watch though welcomed the election of Saudi Arabia as it could contribute to the improvement of the women's situation in this Middle East country.



EU against Gazprom's monopoly

■ The European Union is planning to accuse the huge Russian company, Gazprom with the abuse of its monopolistic position on gas market. The company has a big influence on Eastern and Central European countries that depend mainly on Russia gas. Moscow has used it several times as a tool of political blackmailing. Such event happened the last time when Ukraine tried to set up a closer relationship with the EU: Russia threatened Kyiv with raising the gas prices. These events are highly against the European Union's laws and antitrust policy, this is why EU officials are planning to fine Gazprom to 15 billion dollars.

Immigrants in the centre of attention

■ Illegal immigration is becoming a hot topic in the European Union as the tensions around the Lampedusa tragedy do not seem to get lower. On 3 October more than 250 African people died in a shipwreck of a boat that transported nearly 500 passengers to Italy from Libya. EU commissioners will have a meeting in the end of October and are now expected to take steps to protect the new arrivals with an effective and regular patrol system. A possible solution would be to give bigger budget to Frontex, the EU's specialised organisation that is supposed to halt illegal immigration.



India and Russia jointly back Afghan talks

■ On 21st October, at the 14th India-Russia Annual Summit, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a joint statement in which they said they supported the efforts of the Afghan government towards dialogue with the opposition forces if the guerrillas respected the constitution of Afghanistan. They praised Kabul's attempt to begin government-led peace talks with the armed opposition forces.



Vladimir Putin with Manmohan Singh. Photo: kremlin.ru

The two leaders also expressed their deep concerns regarding illegal drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan, which is the key source of financing Afghan terrorist groups.

Pirate arrested in an undercover action

■ Somali pirate Mohammed Abdi Hassan aka “Big Mouth” was arrested in Belgium on 12 October. He is said to be one of the most influential pirate leaders on the East Coast of Africa. Hassan got a victim of an undercover operation; he thought that he travelled to Brussels for a documentary shoot about his life. When he arrived to the airport, undercover agents immediately arrested him. Now he has to face several criminal charges, such as hijacking, kidnapping, and being a member of a criminal organisation.





Institute for Cultural Relations Policy



<http://culturalrelations.org>