

"Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues"

Cultural Relations Policy

News and Background

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About CRP News & Background

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European Union End-Year Summit 2015



European Union colours. Photo: tristam sparks [Flickr]

In December 2015, European Union (EU) member countries had an end of year summit to discuss five current major issues: migration crisis, terrorism, United Kingdom (UK)'s membership in the EU, single market, and EU's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). However the summit focused more on the issue of the migration crisis and UK's membership in the EU.

The summit aimed to discuss issues surrounding the refugee crisis including areas surrounding migrants' relocation, hotspots and security of the EU's external borders. German Chancellor Angela Merkel invited Turkish Prime Minister (PM) Ahmed Davutoglu for a special meeting with seven other EU countries, including Austria, Belgium, and Greece. Turkey has been the departure country for

the refugees and migrants to go to Greece. Therefore, the meeting was held to discuss ways to reduce the number of incoming migrants and to address the issue of migrant resettlement. In general, progress to resolve some of these key issues has been slow due to lack of consensus amongst member states. A 3 billion euro deal between EU and Turkey had limited success in reducing the flow of migrants and refugees to Greece.

Chancellor Merkel and French PM, Francois Hollande, has supported European Council's proposal for a stronger border force to prevent the incoming migrants and refugees. However the border force has been very controversial due to its defiance of EU's border-free Schengen area agreement.

Another problem is that the European leaders are struggling to maintain unity and to agree on common actions on this matter. Eastern European countries have been reminded by other member countries that they may lose EU funds if they refused to share the burden of accommodating migrants and refugees. The question over the uncertain future of UK EU membership was a tense topic at the summit. British PM David Cameron has proposed a number of reforms as the UK



prepared for an in/out vote on EU membership in 2016. There are four key reforms proposed by Cameron. The first reform involves protection for non-euro countries from potential bail-out issues for euro countries. The second reform addresses the issue of competitiveness by seeking to extend the single market and cut down on excessive regulations. The third reform is to end any obligation to working towards an 'ever closer union' thus withdrawing from deeper forms of political integration. The last reform is on the issue of benefit restrictions.

Cameron hopes to cut the current high levels of immigration from EU states by reducing access to in-work and out-of-work benefits, including housing subsidies. This reform would benefit the UK by reducing the number of EU migrants, especially coming from Central and Eastern Europe. This last reform has received a great deal of criticism from Central and Eastern European countries as they view the proposition as a form of direct discrimination against their citizens.



PM at European Council. Photo: Number 10 [Flickr]

The reforms proposed by PM Cameron have been taken into consideration by some other member countries. However, to fulfil all of the demands would seem impossible to achieve. Compromises will be made from both sides in order to reach an agreement between EU and the UK. Adjustments on the reforms are needed to facilitate the EU's underpinning values and principles. On the other hand, the UK's political actors who demand to be out of EU view staying as a member of EU as the end of Britain being a totally independent and democratic country.

“Compromises will be made from both sides in order to reach an agreement between the EU and the UK.”



Montenegro invited to join the NATO

On December 2 Montenegro was invited to join NATO thus becoming the first former Yugoslav Orthodox country to be invited. Arguably, this decision may reflect NATO's intention of eventually including other Balkan states which are connected culturally and historically to Montenegro. However this may enflame tension with Russia due to her interest in the region, especially with regards to Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Becoming a NATO member is a long process and there is a lot to be done in Montenegro in order to make it happen. Some onlookers believe that the upcoming elections and the process itself gives Russia the chance to influence the outcome of the situation. According to the statements of Russian officials there is no pressure from

Moscow to decline future membership. NATO expansion is declared to be offensive now although prior to the Ukrainian conflict Vladimir Putin personally stated that any country in the region is allowed to join the NATO at its own will.

Some say that Moscow has the opportunity and resources to influence the upcoming elections in Montenegro, this way getting a government which sympathizes with Russia and is against the NATO membership.

The benefits of joining include the possibility to increase tourism revenues and also potentially more investment could be placed in Montenegro if it were to become a member in the future. Stabilizing the area is the aim of the West and this step would mean a lot for progress. In the future this act could open up new ways to expand the NATO.



Flag of NATO. Photo: NATO [Wikimedia Commons]



Flag of Montenegro. Photo: B1mbo, Froztbyte [Wikimedia Commons]



Vladimir Putin picks Turkey over US as the enemy

Russian President Vladimir Putin held his annual end-of-the-year conference on 17 December at the Moscow business center in front of 1,400 journalists. The conference took about 3 hours and 10 minutes and was covered by the state-owned television station, Channel 1.



Direct Line with Vladimir Putin. [Photo: kremlin.ru]

The questions posed included how President Putin wishes to deal with the economic challenges Russia has been struggling with, such as the sharp drop in energy prices and the devalued ruble, other questions addressed issues of foreign policy. As for the economic difficulties currently faced by Russia, the president replied by claiming that the fall in oil prices cannot be considered as his fault and the most severe part of the crisis has

already come to an end. President Putin was instead more interested in discussing foreign policy and Russia's relationship with Turkey and the United States.

On 24 November a Russian bomber was shot down on the Syrian border by Turkey, crashing into a mountainous area, causing the immediate death of a Russian pilot and later, throughout the rescue operations the death of a Russian marine. Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that the Russian warplane was violating Turkey's airspace and was warned on numerous occasions to leave. President Putin claimed that he informed Turkey's close ally, the United States about the path of the mission, he said that the plane stayed within Syria's border during the operation, and he insisted that they had not received any warning to leave. The U.S. supported Turkey in the events, since it was stated by a spokeswoman that nor the United States or its ally was told about the planned air operation. Putin also accused Turkey of trading oil with the so-called Islamic State and he insisted that Turkey's reason for shooting down the plane was to protect the oil smuggling operation on its Syrian border. Erdogan replied to the accusations by declaring that if Russia



claims such behavior then it should prove it to be true, adding that if the allegations appear to be correct he would step down from the presidency, suggesting that the Russian president should do the same if his claims were discovered to be false. Since the incident Russia has announced the suspension of military cooperation with Turkey. Russia since placed restriction on trade with Ankara, imposed visa requirements for Turkish visitors and warned tourists of the dangers of terrorism in the country which in turn led to the cancellation of flights by a major Russian tour operator. However it is arguably only a matter of time until the listed restrictions will be lifted since

both countries need each other, especially economically.

Russia is considered Turkey's second largest trading partner and more than 3 million Russian tourists chose Turkey as their travel destination in 2014.



News conference. [Photo: kremlin.ru]

“Since the incident Russia has announced the suspension of military cooperation with Turkey. Russia since placed restriction on trade with Ankara, imposed visa requirements for Turkish visitors and warned tourists of the dangers of terrorism in the country [...]”



Is Russian involvement effective in fighting IS?

Syria's president Bashar al-Assad of Syria states that the involvement of Russia in the Syrian war has led to the decrease of IS occupied territory. Russia, as an ally of Assad, launched air strikes in order to support him. Assad told Czech television that it was not the US air strikes which were responsible for slowing down IS, but instead it was the result of the Russian bombing. He also condemned the shooting down of a Russian warplane by Turkey in November. Despite the fact that Russia has been bombing Syrian rebels, the country officially states that its primary target is IS. According to the US, the Russian air strikes were mainly targeting "moderate Syrian opposition forces". Syrian opposition activists claim that Russia had targeted towns which were not controlled by IS, resulting in the death of at least 36 people, a number of them children.

Assad partly blames the US air strikes on Syria, which began September last year, for the increase in recruiting and expanding by IS. US Secretary of State, John Kerry, that Russia's involvement in Syria is acceptable as long as Moscow only focusses on IS and al-Qaeda-linked groups. Kerry said at the United Nations Security Council that he would have "grave concerns" if Russia

would conduct strikes against other groups. He added however that "Russia could be an extremely constructive and important player in reaching a solution." The US and its allies insist that Assad should leave the office, while Russia has been an ally of Assad. The US was informed only an hour before the first air strikes took place, which raises the question if better co-ordination is necessary.

Assad expresses that since the participation of Russia not only IS forces are shrinking, but also other terrorist groups' power, such as al-Nusra, has been declining. According to Assad are "the facts are telling." However, in September before Russia's involvement, the territory of IS already was in decline.



Meeting with President of Syria Bashar Assad. [Photo: kremlin.ru]



Constitutional referendum in the Central African Republic

The Central African Republic held a constitutional referendum on 13 December to end years of sectarian violence. Armed fighters tried to block the vote by firing into a queue of people waiting to cast their votes in the Muslim district of Bangui, resulting in at least two deaths and twenty injuries. Nearly 2 million out of the 4.8 million citizens of the Central African Republic were registered to vote, hoping to return to a peaceful and ordinary life. Participation ended up being about 38%, and 93% of the participants voted for a new constitution, which, if adopted, would limit

the presidency to two terms, battle institutional corruption, create a Senate as the main body of legislature and prohibit “all kinds of religious fundamentalism and intolerance”. The new constitution states that current members of the legislative branch are not allowed to participate in the upcoming elections and members of parliament and the constitutional court would no longer be able to enjoy immunity if found guilty of treason. The vote was a trial run before the presidential and parliamentary elections which were supposed to take place on 27 December, but were delayed by 3 days.



Catherine Samba-Panza, President of the CAR. Photo: MINUSCA [Flickr]



Flag of the Central African Republic. Photo: Nightstallion [Wikimedia Commons]



2015 Burundian unrest

Three military sites were attacked by gunmen in Bujumbura, Burundi on 11 December, causing nearly 90 deaths. It has been reported as the worst outbreak of violence in Burundi since the failed coup in May, which attempted to topple President Pierre Nkurunziza. According to military spokesman, Colonel Gaspard Baratuza, the main goal of the attackers was to “steal weapons and use them to free prisoners”, adding that “the situation has been normalized” by the army. The violence in the country started in April, when Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he was running for re-election in July, which would have made it his third term, violating the two-term limit. The unrest left 277 people dead and several hundred people imprisoned, causing the opposition forces to call for international help to stop the re-election. On 11 December morning the Council of Ministers held an emergency meeting to discuss the attacks, in which four police officers, four soldiers and 79 attackers were killed, 45 attackers were captured and 97 weapons were seized. On the day of the attacks, the army reported that 12 rebel gunmen had been killed and 21 captured, but

on the morning of the following day residents woke up to find 39 corpses lying in the streets. Colonel Baratuza said that the fighting continued during the night and the corpses found were identified as enemies. According to some witnesses the attacks were followed by policemen breaking into homes, pulling the men out and taking them to a distant location to execute them. Other witnesses told that some of the victims had their hands tied, but when an army spokesman was asked about it he denied sharing the details of the deaths. The bodies were collected by the government and put into mass graves “to prevent the spread of disease”, but residents saw it as a cover-up, making accusations, saying that the government was just “trying to hide the evidence of the massacre carried out by the security forces”. Experts, western powers and neighbouring nations fear that the violence will continue. However, on the one hand experts say that the army seems to be showing some fracturing, which might lead to a broader conflict, yet on the other hand western powers and regional nations are afraid that the old ethnic divisions might reemerge.



President Yahya Jammeh of Gambia declares the country an Islamic republic

Gambian President Yahya Jammeh declared Gambia as an Islamic republic in an attempt to further distance the country from its colonial past. Gambia gained independence in 1965 from the colony and President Jammeh has ruled Gambia since 1994. Gambia has 1,8 million people who are approximately 90% Muslim, the remaining 10% are Christian and indigenous religion believers. Turning Gambia into an Islamic republic is of course in line with the religious beliefs of the majority. However, Jammeh reassured the public that people who exercise other religions will be respected and protected. President Jammeh has ruled Gambia with a trademark mix of witchcraft, oppression, and anti-colonial rhetoric. He is also full of surprises. In 2007, he claimed to have found a cure for Aids. In 2013, he pulled Gambia out of the Commonwealth because he saw it as neo-colonialist. His decision to name Gambia as an Islamic republic has sparked some controversy. The opposition criticised his action by claiming the move as a violation of the constitution since there is a clause stating that Gambia is a secular state. Without the legitimacy of a referendum, it seems impossible to enforce his declaration. The head of country's

Islamic body has not even endorsed his declaration yet. Sidi Sanneh, a former foreign minister, argued that Jammeh is acting this way in order to gain support from the Arab world. Gambia's track record with the West has deteriorated in recent years despite the existing strong commercial ties. Therefore, Jammeh is trying to seek alternative sources of funding from the Arab world. In 2014, the EU temporarily withheld aid from Gambia due to its poor human rights record. In September 2015, Human Rights Watch banded his regime as one of the most repressive in the world, blaming paramilitaries and secret police for torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings. The abuses including arbitrary arrests and detention of political opponents as well as gruesomely inventive methods of torture, such as melting plastic bags on victims' skins and inserting hot chilli peppers up their rectums. Due to international pressure, in November 2015, Jammeh announced that female genital mutilation would be outlawed. However, his declaration has not turned into a law yet. Therefore human rights activists asked for more international pressure since it is needed to pursue the making of the law.



Territorial disputes in the South China Sea

The dispute between China and Vietnam over the South China Sea is beginning to escalate as Vietnam speeds up its military's modernization, potentially causing another flashpoint in the history of the countries' relations, just like the border war they fought in 1979.

Last year China caused riots to spread over Vietnam following her decision to place an oil rig in the disputed waters, which remained there for about two and a half months. Officials in Hanoi noted that this incident counted as a game-changer. Such actions led to Vietnam responding to this sense of increased vulnerability by focusing much more heavily on combat readiness. A senior Vietnamese government official stated that although "Hanoi was not looking for a conflict with China, they must be prepared for the worst". Therefore Vietnam's strategy has moved from planning to the decision to

alert its key units to be ready to defend against an unexpected attack if necessary. Hanoi has also been focusing on building tighter relationships with its strategic partners, mainly reaching out to Russia and India, since both countries have been supplying weapons and been organizing trainings besides being the main source of intelligence cooperation. Vietnam is currently planning to purchase fighter and maritime patrol planes as well as unarmed surveillance drones from Europe and the United States, whilst receiving equipment from Israel and Russia. Carl Thayer, a professor at Australia's Defense Force Academy believes that if a conflict did erupt between China and Vietnam then Hanoi's "aim would be to inflict sufficient damage and psychological uncertainty" causing "Lloyd's insurance rates to skyrocket and for foreign investors to panic" instead of defeating China's forces.

“Hanoi has also been focusing on building tighter relationships with its strategic partners, mainly reaching out to Russia and India.”



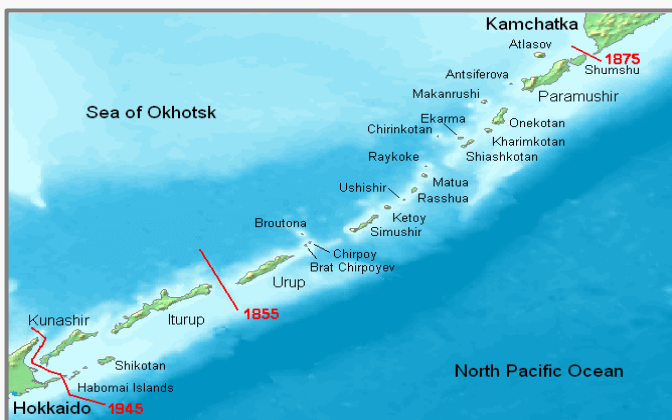
Kuril Islands dispute

Relations between Russia and Japan have been rocky for decades due to a dispute over a number of islands which are currently under Russian jurisdiction. The Kurils is a chain of islands, extending north across the Pacific Ocean from a Japanese island called Hokkaido to the southern tip of Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula. Russia has constructed hundreds of military buildings on two of the southernmost islands which are claimed by Japan, Kunashir and Iturup, which, according to the ministry, aim to help to "raise the combat readiness of troops on the eastern frontiers of Russia". Russia is also planning to put up a number of prefabricated buildings and begin other constructions, including

the building of schools, kindergartens, leisure centers and dormitories. Moreover Russia has multiple investments in the region and has also rebuilt the originally Japanese-built Kunashir airport.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu stated that the priority is to finish what they have started this year, which are "the most essential building and the engineering infrastructure" so that they can receive armed forces and their equipment, not mentioning the long-term purpose of the constructions.

As for the relationship between the two countries, there has not yet been any agreement over a peace treaty thus the tension between them remains palpable.



The Kuril Islands with the disputed islands. Photo: ChrisDHDR [Wikimedia Commons]



Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu. [Photo: kremlin.ru]



■ News in Brief

Domestic Affairs affecting international relations

Terror threats in London on New Year's Eve

■ According to Scotland Yard there will be high numbers of police officers on duty in London for New Year's Eve celebrations. 3000 officers will be on duty in the city center at main locations and another 3000 at the outer areas. More than 600 officers will be responsible for the security of main tube and bus stations. The event has always been heavily secured and these measures do not mean that there are specific threats received for the celebrations. However an attack could still be possible so the raised security level assures the public of their safety.

Women assaulted during New Year's Eve in Cologne

■ According to Ralf Jaeger, interior minister for North Rhine-Westphalia, police in Germany will have to rethink their strategy after the New Year's Eve attacks in Cologne. German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere criticized the authorities for how they handled the situation. Although, Cologne police chief Wolfgang Albers rejected the criticism of his officers, police union chief Rainer Wendt declared that a lack of resources prevented the police from being able to successfully manage the attacks. More than 100 complaints were issued, but nobody has yet been arrested. Other similar attacks in Germany occurred in Hamburg and Stuttgart on the same evening.

Brazilian President faces impeachment proceedings over corruption scandal

■ Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff is facing impeachment proceedings on allegations that she broke the law in managing the 2014's budget which violated Brazil's fiscal responsibility laws. She also faces allegations of a corruption scandal involving the state-owned oil giant company, Petrobras. The popularity of President Rousseff has plummeted after her re-election due to the corruption scandal. The opposition side encourages the impeachment proceedings to be executed. On the other hand, President Rousseff responded to the allegations by saying that those are false allegations to incriminate her, especially during this period when the Brazilian economy is declining even more.



Istanbul's metro blast

■ An explosion caused by a bomb on an overpass near Istanbul's Bayrampasa metro station, left at least one person injured and resulted in the suspension of the city's metro network. The explosion could be heard from various parts of the city and even though there was no fire, the windows of some cars were broken.

Fire in a hotel in Dubai on New Year's Eve

■ A huge fire engulfed in a 63-storey luxurious hotel in Dubai, just a couple of hours before New Year's Eve. The fire spread very quickly throughout the whole hotel and the cause of the fire is yet unknown. Dubai authorities reported that 16 people were injured, and one person had suffered a heart attack.

Possible Iraqi Kurdish referendum

■ Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), is working on preparations for a referendum regarding a possible separation with Iraq. Last year, preparations for a similar referendum were made, but these were postponed because ISIL attacked the region and moved closer to the Iraqi Kurdish capital Arbil. However, US-led airstrikes were able to decrease ISIL occupied territory. Currently, the Iraqi government remains strongly against a separatist referendum, but has little power to stop it from happening.

Burkina Faso has elected a new president

■ Roch Marc Christian Kabore, a former banker and prime minister, has won the presidential elections in Burkina Faso by securing 53,5% of the total vote. It is the first election since the former president, Blaise Compaore, was overthrown by a popular uprising in 2014. Mr. Compaore was in power for 27 years and intended to extend his term for another 5 years by changing the constitution. Mr. Kabore was an ally to Mr. Compaore, but moved to the opposition side after Mr. Compaore decided to change the constitution. Disagreeing with Mr. Compaore, Mr. Kabore started the campaign against the constitutional change which resulted into the fall of Mr. Compaore. Mr Kabore's actions have caught the people of Burkina Faso's attention and have enabled him to win the election.

Mali declares a 10-day state of emergency

■ A series of threats coming from unnamed jihadist groups forced Mali's government to declare a state of emergency. After French forces drove the militants out of key Northern towns two years ago, an Islamist insurgency has begun to grow. In addition, a jihadist attack on a luxury hotel in November which resulted in 20 people dead contributed to amounting fear.



Al-Shabaab group of Somali attack a bus full of students in Mandera, Kenya

■ A Somali based Islamist militant group al-Shabab attacked a bus full of students in Mandera, Kenya. Al-Shabab was responsible for the killing of 148 people on Garissa University College in April 2015. The attackers reportedly victimised Christians while allowing Muslims to leave freely. In the case of Mandera attack, the Muslim students reportedly asked the militants to 'either let them [both the Muslim and Christian students] go or kill them all together'. At least two people were killed during the attack. In 2014, a bus was also attacked near Mandera by al-Shabab militants which resulted in the killing of 28 non-Muslims who were at that time travelling to Nairobi for the Christmas holidays. Al-Shabab militants are responsible for several attacks which have occurred in Kenya in the past three years.

Deadly flooding in Chennai, India

■ The southern Indian city of Chennai faced a deadly flooding in the beginning of December. The flooding caused flights and trains to be suspended in addition to power outage which affected hundreds of people. Previously in November, flooding in Tamil Nadu state killed at least 188 people. In response to the flooding in Chennai, about 10,000 policemen and swimmers were deployed to assist and rescue people during the tragic event. People who did not get affected by the flooding have taken to social media to offer accommodation and food to citizens who have to evacuate their home.

North Korea announces that the country is now in possession of a hydrogen bomb

■ North Korean national news agency has reported that the country has developed, and now is in possession, of a hydrogen bomb. Kim Jong-un states that they have become a significant nuclear power and they will use the developments in order to defend their country and independence. The hydrogen bomb is an advanced piece of nuclear technology which is capable of creating more powerful blasts than regular atomic bombs. Kim Jong-un also said that North Korea will continue its development of military forces and weapons.



Al Shabaab fighters disengage and lay down arms. Photo: AMISOM [Flickr]



Flag of North Korea. Photo: Zscout370 [Wikimedia Commons]



■ News in Brief

Bilateral relations

US spying on Israel

■ Another surveillance controversy may cause damage to President Barack Obama's final year of office. During the negotiations for the Iran nuclear power agreement, the USA spied on Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, due to fears that Israel might attack Iran. National Security Council spokesman Ned Price, stated that foreign intelligence surveillance activities were conducted with a specific and validated national security purpose. He added that USA's support for Israel was an important element in deterring Iran from ever seeking a nuclear weapon and remains a critical part of pushing back against Iran's destabilising actions in the region.

US & Cuba reach agreement concerning commercial flights

■ A step forward has been made in normalising the relations between USA and Cuba, as the two countries agreed on a deal to restore regular commercial flights. A ban on touristic travel in Cuba remains for the US citizens (using chart flights and strict baggage limits), however in the past year there has been a considerable raise of authorised American travel to the island. In addition embassies were opened in Havana and Washington, a pilot postal programme has been agreed, phone links established, environmental deals have been inked, human rights talks have started, as well as a number of other developments which might end with the US trade embargo lifted.

Canada welcomes Syrian refugees

■ After long preparation the first plane arrived with Syrian refugee passengers to Canada, Toronto on the 10th of December. Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau greeted them, and pointed out that the country is open for people coming from countries with extraordinary situations. There are plans to settle 10,000 more people by the end of the year and 15000 by the end of February. Before the Paris attacks, even greater numbers had been planned but later were reduced due to security reasons. The media is supportive and it looks like the majority of the Canadians welcome the decision.

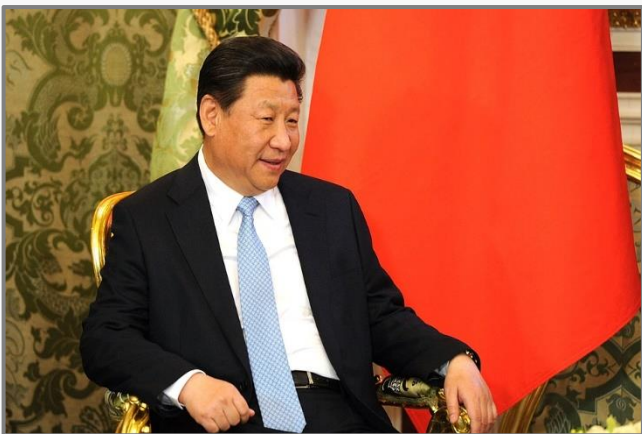


Venezuela response on human rights comments by Argentina

■ In the recent Mercosur bloc summit, the newly-elected Argentine President Mauricio Macri called on all South American leaders to push for the release of Venezuelan political prisoners. This motion was supported by the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States. The Venezuelan government has denied the accusation of holding political prisoners. However, there are several high-profile opposition leaders currently imprisoned by the government which has caught attention and brought condemnation from human rights groups and also international actors. In response to the comments, Venezuela accused Argentina for meddling in their internal affairs. The Venezuelan foreign minister Delcy Rodríguez highlighted the fact that Argentina did not bring some of those who had committed human rights abuses in the period of 1970s-1980s to justice, as a response to Argentina's comment.

China's President Xi Jinping visits Zimbabwe to deepen the economic relation

■ China's President Xi Jinping went to Zimbabwe at the beginning of December to meet with the President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe. President Jinping was declared as the most prominent global leader to have visited Zimbabwe. The purpose of his visit to Zimbabwe was to strengthen the already deep and firm relationship between the two nations, especially in the area of economy. China has been a major investor in Zimbabwe as President Mugabe's policy is to seek more allies in the East after the West isolated him because of his controversial land reform policy. The two nations are expected to sign an agreement to boost Zimbabwe's agriculture, mining, and manufacturing sectors.



Chinese President Xi Jinping. [Photo: kremlin.ru]



Mauricio Macri. Photo: Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires [Wikimedia Commons]



■ News in Brief

International relations

Arrests in Brussel concerning the Paris attacks

■ In Belgium five people were detained in connection with the Paris attacks. Two people were found after a house search in the Laeken district of Brussels. The first day of the raids resulted in the finding of an additional 3 suspects in another house. The police did not give out details of the arrests. The only information they shared was that these people were to be questioned and that Salah Abdeslam, who was involved in the Paris attacks, was not one of them. The police are still on lookout for Salah Abdeslam who is currently one of Europe's most wanted criminals.



Trump at an early campaign event. Photo: Michael Vadon [Wikimedia Commons]



Police gathering evidence. Photo: Maya-Anais Yataghène [Wikimedia Commons]

Trump calls for a ban on the entry of Muslims into the US

■ On December 2, 14 people were killed and 22 seriously injured in a terrorist attack in San Bernardino during an office party. The perpetrators were a married couple, both of Pakistani descent. They were killed in a police shootout shortly after the attack. Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump called for a ban on Muslims entering the US. His proposal was widely condemned both outside and inside the US, also among prominent members of the Republican Party.

China seeks for alternative fresh air from Canada

■ Due to the elevated level of pollution in China, Chinese people seek for alternative fresh air from Canada. Vitality Air, a Canadian start-up company, works on bottling fresh air from the Rocky Mountains, has been exporting their products to China. The first shipment of 500 bottles of fresh air was sold out in four days. The cost for a 7.7 litre can of Rocky Mountains' air sells for roughly 100 yuan or 13 euro, which is 50 times more expensive than a bottle of mineral water in China. The customers are mostly people who live in the north eastern and southern parts of China which have severe pollution levels.





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