

„Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues“

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About CRP News & Background

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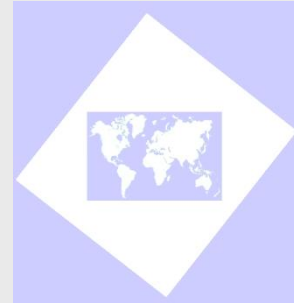
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Ten days of war between Gaza and Israel

Antagonism of Israel and the Hamas sympathiser Palestinians of the Gaza Strip have been tensioning situations in the Middle East for years and caused a long string of incidents. The eventual firings of Israel's territory and civilians and the tight blockade of Gaza causing lack of basic goods but could not stop smuggling arms for militants, are the key experiences made the relation of the sides no chance of a real bilateral solution, and the issue drastically overshadows Israeli-Arab collaborations in general.

Relative peace of the region vanished on 10 November, the day when an anti-tank missile launched from the Strip flew across the border and hit a patrolling military jeep of the Israeli Defence Forces, wounding 4 soldiers. The incident was a certain proof of the improving military capabilities of the Palestinian militants located Gaza. But soon after this, a comprehensive attack carried out with more than 30 rockets put under terror the Israeli cities of Ashkelon and Ashdod. Some of the missiles were intercepted by Iron Dome defence system, many of them landed outside of inhabited areas and the remainder ones caused small damage of infrastructure led local power outage but none of the residents received an injury. IDF responded quickly



Rising smoke in Gaza after it was hit by Israeli airstrikes [Photo: Scott Bobb]

and severely operating air strikes on rocket-launching squads in Gaza killing at least one member. The end of the day, military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad called al-Quds Brigades admitted most of the rocket launches, and responsibility for others was taken by other Palestinian militias, while Hamas firmly condemned Israeli counterattacks and accused they targeted civilians.

During the following three days, more than 100 rockets were fired at Israel followed by retaliation actions of its forces. On the evening of 13 November, representatives of the sides agreed to hold a truce, but they added too, they reserved the right to fire back if they are attacked. The initiative with wide international backing could not stop violence permanently but achieved noticeable consolidation of the border region the next day. Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Ehud Barak visited separately the south of Israel to underscore Jerusalem's support for the most targeted people.

In accordance with continuing casual fire from Gaza and their former declaration meant Israel considered Hamas responsible for all attacks come from the Gaza Strip, an Israeli missile killed Ahmed Al-Jabari, leader of Hamas' military group Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, while he was travelling by car in the city with his son also died in the targeted assassination on the following day the truce was proclaimed.

Actions of both sides continued with various intensity. Islamists reached Tel Aviv – the city was not rocketed since 1991 – using a long-range Iranian built Fajr-5 missile exploded in a suburb of the city but no casualties were reported. Besides the air force carried out bombardments of targets in the Strip aiming to ruin Palestinian military machine, the Defence Minister called 30,000 reservists among armoured vehicles and tanks to prepare a ground offensive in the case of this operation is inevitable. President of Egypt Mohamed Morsi negotiated the issue on a telephone conference with the US President and chief of UN Ban Ki-moon. Morsi rejected Israeli operations and withdrew its ambassador from the Jewish state, and urged UN to call an emergency meeting of the Security Council. Parallel with this members of the Arab League also gathered to discuss the case, but these efforts did not affect seriously the current violence.

Hamas leaders called Muslim politicians to provide diplomatic support for Palestinians and this claim regarded especially to Egyptian leaders. Egyptians' popular support to the Gazans proved by rallies all over the country demonstrating against Israel's bombings and some of them expected more commanding presence of Cairo. This domestic pressure prompted President Morsi and the cabinet – both entered office just some months ago – to react, and this situation also showed an opportunity of Egypt to return international politics as a strong and stable state has specific influence on Middle East. Because Egypt and even its recent Islamist president respect the existing of Israel state, there was chance of a successful dialogue. After former reconciliation of Israel, Egypt and the Strip, Cairo's Prime Minister Hesham Qandil visited Gaza on 16 November. During his brief presence, only Israel held its fire while militants launched rockets aiming at towns north from the border. Qandil's statement deepened disappointment since he even did not mentioned a cease-fire on the horizon, his speech focused on



Destruction in Gaza after Israeli bombardment, part of Operation Pillar of Defense
[Photo: Scott Bobb]



Israel announced military operations on Twitter

expressing Palestinians support from Egyptians and all Muslims.

Violence escalated during the following days causing heavy losses. Armed groups in Gaza took serious efforts to improve the range of their own-made unguided missiles widely named Qassams after the most common operator of them the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam. A newly advanced version of the weapon landed just outside Jerusalem causing no injuries but the rocket-raid shocked the capital.

Israel intensified air strikes of Gaza bombing at least 80 targets on Sunday, 18 November. They targeted the house of a Hamas man, but the explosion killed nine other members of a family including children. Haaretz Israeli newspaper reported the target was Yehiya Rabiah leader of a rocket launching unit, but the strike mistakenly hit a neighbouring house and put policeman Mohamed Dalou and his relatives to death. Another attack hit a media office wounding 6 journalists and destroyed offices of some foreign news agencies. Israel continued concentrate its ground forces and collaborated on a possible peace plan with Egypt, Turkey and the United States. As it is a key ally in the region, President Obama fully supported Israel's right to defend its citizens and urged an agreement to prevent invasion of IDF. Two prominent Israeli newspapers, the

Jerusalem Post and the Haaretz reported that rockets were fired from the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt caused damage of properties in the south of Israel, but the incident was not reaffirmed by authorities of Cairo or Jerusalem. President Morsi brokered plans of a cease-fire, both Hamas and Israel declared their conditions of the deal. Israel expected Hamas stop all fire from Gaza, Palestinians demanded the end of air strikes and the wipe up of blockade of the enclave.

President Simon Peres welcomed the efforts of Morsi to establish an agreement of the sides in the worsening crisis and stated Iran is the only obstructing a truce agreement playing a destructive role and encouraging, supporting militants fire on Israel. Russian Foreign Ministry rejected violence with no partiality saying „shelling of the Israeli territory and disproportionate strikes on Gaza, which harms innocent civilians, is unacceptable.” The international background favoured to the announcement of a cease-fire rather than an Israeli offensive. Military analysts of Jerusalem believed that most goals Israel can achieve using military force were realized by the air strikes, the involvement



Destruction in Gaza after Israeli bombardment, part of Operation Pillar of Defense
[Photo: Scott Bobb]

of ground forces would certainly increase the casualties on both sides, and the popularity of this attack was low either in the army or among civilians.

As a final act of the violence, an exploding device wounded 28 people travelling on a bus in the centre of Tel Aviv. The attack was not a suicide bombing. The bus was not crowded when the moderate power explosion happened. No one took responsibility for the blast but authorities suspected Palestinian terrorists plotted the action to respond Israel's threat of an incursion. As soon as the news reached Gaza, widespread celebrations were reported from its streets.

The desired agreement of a cease-fire took effect late in the evening on 21 November and became public in a news conference in Cairo with Hillary Clinton and Mohamed Kamel Amr, leaders of foreign affairs of US and Egypt. According to the treaty, both sides terminated violence and border crossing of people and goods began between Israel and Gaza late night.

Palestinians came to the streets and celebrated a victory over the Israeli forces. The days of aggression killed 6 Israelis and more than 100 Palestinians, and though a long-lasting solution of the Gaza Strip is not closer than before, its time to enjoy peace in the area.



**“MISSILES REACHED TEL AVIV -
THE CITY WAS NOT ROCKETED SINCE 1991”**

Catalonia steps closer to independence

In early November 2012, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy criticised Catalonia's separatist efforts on a radio interview saying it "goes against history, goes against the sign of the times, and goes against the simple common sense." Madrid's official statement rejects firmly the independence attempts of the Catalans and emphasized the Constitution of Spain does not accept such self-proclaimed secession as it declares the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation and the indivisible homeland of all Spaniards. Rajoy accused Artur Mas President of Catalonia as a divisor of the nation, who should collaborate on solving the serious problems Spain facing recently, instead of creating new difficulties.

The demand for independence of the eastern autonomous community with the population of 7.5 million is an issue for decades, but in the last two years it has raised popularity rapidly among the Catalans with doubling the number of its supporters who take 57 percent majority, as opinion polls highlighted. The widespread recession of Spain boosted the initiative in Catalonia, which economy is still promising and its social and economic condition is far better than in many other regions of the country. These facts focused Catalonia's attention on the state's redistribution

system and turned up: in each year they get back 15 billion euros less than they pay for the national treasury. This negative saldo added further dissatisfaction and they see Madrid deprives sources to maintain other regions, and Catalonia gets back the government's austerity measures in return. The regional government also covers the one-third of the expenses of some public services including education, health care and even the police should be entirely covered by the Spanish state, according to Catalans.



Artur Mas President of Catalonia

Photo: Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya [Flickr]



In this atmosphere was the Catalanian parliamentary election held on 25 November, after a heavy campaign concentrated much more on emotional independence questions than concrete socio-economic issues. Two tendencies have been enlightened by analyses of the event. First, the pro-independence parties increased their influence on the Parliament, although the winner and ruling format, the centre-right Convergence and Union secured just 50 seats – 12 seats less than it holds now – but still remained the strongest political group. Second, the leftist parties strengthened their positions, which make the inevitable coalitional ruling cumbersome. Besides differences of their political ideology, the main basis of the new governance is the party's relation to independence; supporters of this idea won 74 seats of total 135.

Progress of power sympathizing with self-ruling makes the Madrid-Barcelona negotiation an even tougher matter, and a Catalanian secession can be easily considered as a precedent by some other parts of the country. Elections for the Basque Parliament were held on 21 October, and the results and trends are very similar to what happened in Catalonia. Spaniards opposing the breakaway of these territories expect their leaders to manage a successful dialogue with such regions and prevent the country from falling apart. Madrid announced in the possible case of Catalonia become independent, it does not mean the region remains an EU-member automatically. Even the euro currency can be a subject of hard dispute, since Brussels stated a new independent state would fulfil the admission process, which ending is under the danger of a Spanish revenge.



Austerity unites Europe

On 14 November trade unions called workers to protest against the governments' policy of tax rising and cutting salaries, pensions and other social benefits as part of the measures intend to correct their balance. This was the first time trade unions of EU member states invited their members to participate in an organized action to urge political leaders to abandon austerity policy which is not a real solution of the difficulties and affects the most on poor and weak people – as protestors said.

In some of the countries the unions launched a general strike to give weighty impact of their claims. Public transport was the most deeply concerned and this resulted the standstill of Lisbon's metro system, the rail service in Portugal, Spain and even in Germany was hit by the strike, and airlines had to cancel hundreds of flights because of lack of service at the airports. Clashes between demonstrators and police forces left at least 120 people hurt in the Iberian Peninsula, where both protests and the efforts to extinguish these events were the firmest of all countries. In several cities of Italy, marches were held with thousands of people, most of them were students who feel austerity endangers

their free health care and university education. However most of these processions were peacefully, at least three members of riot police needed hospitalization. In Greece, the most indebted link of the EU economy, the call for strike caused relatively small effects, in Athens protestors carried the flags of Italy, Spain and Portugal to reinforce the all-European nature of anti-austerity demonstrations, many of them blamed the German Chancellor the most, who is widely considered the enforcer of the governments' severe spending cuts. Sympathy was the leading cause of smaller scale gatherings in Germany, France and Belgium. In Brussels, in the heart of the Union people demonstrated to emphasize austerity measures are not working and only increase social differences within the society.

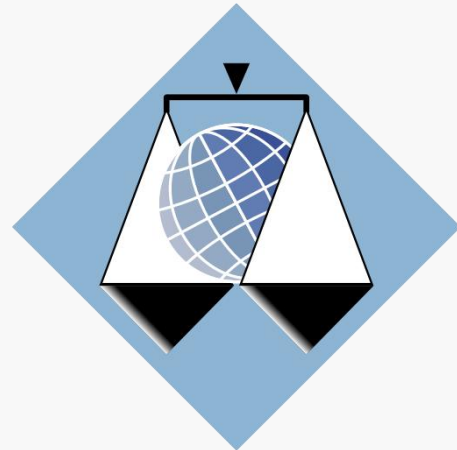
The EU faces serious problems these days. Some surveys stated the eurozone is slipping back to recession again and the rate of unemployment is rising slowly and peaked 15.8% in Greece and broke the 20% limit in Spain, and in general one in every eight people is jobless in the eurozone, which means 25 million unemployed citizens.

Storm ended with acquittal

On 16 November, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), a war crime court in The Hague released two army Generals: Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac, who were charged with war crimes committed during the Croatian war for independent, part of the war of the Balkan in the 1990s. The court stated there was no organized crime enterprise among the Croatian leaders which could plot and carry out systematically the ethnically cleanse of the Krajina region. Right after the ruling the two men were taken to Rotterdam airport where a government plane transported them to home. At the same time squares of Zagreb and Pakostane – the hometown of Gotovina – were fully crowded with Croats celebrating the verdict followed the event on big screens. The phenomenon as a simple weekday burst into an ad hoc national festival showed clearly that this case is about much more than the legal proceedings of two former generals. They are iconic persons of the Croatian national identity who played crucial roles during the war resulted the independence of Croatia, a former member state of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Croats find this ruling as an official ending of the war and war related legal issues. The

lawsuit started in 2004 when Ivan Cermak Colonel General, Mladen Markac Commander of the Special Police and Ante Gotovina overall operational



commander were accused of atrocities against Serbs of Krajina, which was a separatist self-proclaimed Serbian independent entity inside the internationally accepted territory of Croatia, aimed to join Belgrade and follow its authority. The Croatian armed forces launched a 4-days lasting absolute successful offensive with the code name Operation Storm on 4 August 1991, to retake this region. The judgement of the Trial Chamber of ICTY on 15 April 2011 acquitted Cermak but sentenced Gotovina to 24 and Markac to 18-years' imprisonment. Now the Appeal Chamber

of the same court did not find evidence of the alleged crime enterprise and released the two former military officers immediately. Serbian government leaders blamed the court selective jurisdiction which undermines its own credibility, and demanded the documents of the proceedings to carry out an independent investigation.



*General Ante Gotovina greeting people after landing in Croatia on November 16, 2012
Photo: Government of the Republic of Croatia [Flickr]*

As the new verdict notably raised the reputation of not just the court, but also other European organizations in general

among Croats, the ruling is supposed to possess a strong political background. The extension of the EU gives a push to the community's self-image at the time when its judgement is rather negative by EU citizens. The decision and its aftermath may purpose certain stabilization in the West-Balkan and prompts the EU-Croatia relation, which country expected to become the new member of the organization in mid 2013.

Two days after his release, during one of his interviews, Gotovina called ethnic Serbs removed by the operation to return Croatia, which is their homeland too, and mentioned these people are citizens of Croatia. This gesture tried to support a new peaceful relation between neighbours, but rejected rigidly by nationalist Croats, showing the political-national atmosphere is still very sensitive in the post-Yugoslavian states.

**“ICONIC PERSONS OF THE CROATIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY
WHO PLAYED CRUCIAL ROLES DURING THE WAR”**

USA: Obama presidency continues

China: Changes in the political leadership

After months of hard and costly campaign – the rivals estimated to spend more than 2.5 billion US dollars just on the presidential race – voting ended on 6 November, and majority people gave an Obama sign and authorized Barack Obama to fulfil a second term presidency. The result empowered the two term tendency, as Bill Clinton and George W. Bush served the nation as head of the state for 8 years.

Despite Mitt Romney candidate of Republicans and his team competed neck and neck with the Democrats and the opinion polls even on Election Day projected a close result, Obama won the scramble for presidency with a wide margin. It happened because presidency is elected by a specific indirect way, when popular votes determine the composition of Electoral College which institute officially elects the person of both President and Vice President of the States. Some experts highlighted although the popularity of the candidates was close to even in nation-wide surveys, the electoral system favoured to the incumbent President, since States projected to be won by Democrats provided more electoral seats of the College than those ones under Republican domination. That meant Romney had just a slight path to presidency, because he was

very in the need of his victory over the “swing states”. Both candidates focused on influencing the voters of these states, especially during the very end of the campaign. With the exception of North Carolina, these key states were won by Obama and final results favoured him as he won 4 percent more popular votes, two states more but altogether much more electors than his opponent. Obama obtained 332 Democrat members for the 538-member Electoral College, which elects the leaders of the country with simple majority.



Barack Obama talks on the phone with Mitt Romney on 6 November 2012. Romney called to concede the 2012 US Presidential Election and to congratulate President Obama on his re-election.

In Florida, Obama won with just 0.88% surplus of the popular votes, and because of the close match, official results delayed. But finally, according to the “winner takes it all” method – which is valid for 48 states, with the exception of Maine and Nebraska – Democrats acquired Sunshine State’s all 29 electoral seats.

Besides presidential election, Senate and House of Representatives elections were also held on the same day. One third of 100 Senate positions were decided and Democrats supported their majority with 2 new seats. In the case of the lower house of the bicameral Congress, Republicans managed to retain it under control with holding majority, though Democrats reinforced their power with 8 recent seats.

As Obama stated in his victory speech broadcasted from Chicago, he invited his challenger to a face to face conversation. They consumed a lunch together in the Oval Office on 29 November, and



President Barack Obama at a 2012 Presidential election campaign rally in Iowa

discussed some issues, but they concentrated especially on the States' role in the global international order. Each of them emphasized the country's unity even after a cruel campaign in their speeches made since Election Day, but this one hour-lasting conversation is more likely a political gesture than the strong basis of Democrat-Republican cooperation of the future.

Emerging politicians in China

In contrast to the continuous governance in Washington, the Chinese political elite suffered severe transformation as the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China elected 5 new politics, and re-elected two key figures to the Politburo Standing Committee, the top leading organization of both the party and the country. The real winner of this occasion was Vice President Xi Jinping, who became the new General Secretary of the Communist Party and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission. This increase of his power with his wide popularity among cadres makes him the most probable successor of President Hu Jintao, whose current term ends in March 2013. The leadership is mostly considered as more conservative than reformist, especially after two younger reformist, Wang Yang and Li Yuanchao have been left out of the new committee mostly influenced by Jiang Zemin's activity.

Rise of Palestine's status

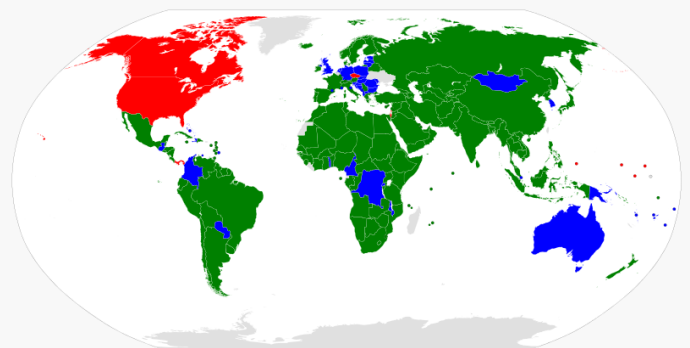
November was a hard month for Palestine-Israeli relations and not only because of the Gazan conflict but even in the dimension of international law. Palestine's claim for its new status resulted clashes in many different ways.

Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman launched a threatening offensive and envisaged the collapse of the Palestine Authority caused by the Israeli reactions if the claim passes – for example the freezing the transfers of tax and tariff revenues collected by Tel Aviv on its behalf can hit financially the authority. He mentioned Abbas holds a weak position and this event can be used to dismiss the Palestinian leader.

Palestinian cyber attacks on Israeli pages become more frequent these days, and they achieved two remarkable actions in the middle of November. First a hacker group called Anonymous broke up websites of Israeli Defence Ministry, Bank of Jerusalem and even the president's official home page, then leaked personal information of thousands of Israeli officials. On the 21 in the same month ZCompanyHackingCrew filled the personal accounts on social networking services of Israeli Deputy Premier Silvan Shalom with pro-Palestine contents and hacked his email too.

Attempting to cast suspicion on Israel they also recited the alleged poisoning of their iconic chief Yasser Arafat. After his mausoleum in the West Bank city of Ramallah opened a group of international experts started analyzing the samples removed from his remains. The mystery around his death was refreshed by independent measures in August, which found an abnormal level of radiation and presence of polonium-210 – the lethal material became widely known after the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko – on former leader's clothes and toothbrush. Israel firmly denied any kind of accusations regarding Arafat's death and the ongoing investigation needs months to prepare its report which is expected to go under heavy disputes.

Besides all these struggles, the status upgrade was really in the hands of voters of the United Nations General Assembly. Since



A map showing states' votes on upgrading Palestine's status at the UN to non-member observer state (red – no, green – yes, blue – abstain)

1974, Palestine Liberation Organization as accepted representative of Palestinian people was granted with non-member observer entity status and invited to participate on the work of UN organizations. The motion aiming non-member observer state status was proposed by Palestine's UN delegates with the support of many countries, and after a debate the voting took place on 29 November with 138 votes in favour of the claim, 9 opposed including the United States and Israel, and 41 abstained what meant the motion passed with noticeable higher approval than the required simple majority.

The resolution established "a birth certificate of the reality of the State of Palestine" – as Mahmoud Abbas said, and this success certainly restores the reputation of the Fatah politician and President of Palestine, whose influence on Hamas Palestinians and on the Gaza Strip became



very limited recently. Hamas' spokesman welcomed the decision but emphasized his organization maintains its right to achieve its own interests in its own way. The United States and Israel responded the decision is harmful to Israeli-Palestinian cooperation and „places further obstacles in the path peace" and Israel launched a new housing project of 3,000 homes in the Palestinian East Jerusalem and the West Bank.



Mahmoud Abbas

But the main benefits of this resolution are still not clear. Palestine is still far from real independence and this issue could not promote a unification of Palestinians of the Gaza and the West Bank areas. Some analyses supposed the upgraded status gives Palestine an easier access to international organizations, most significant of them is the International Criminal Court where they can accuse Israel with weighty charges, such as war crime.

Humanitarian emergency and diplomatic progress of Syrian opposition

Despite the war in Syria turned into a positional warfare, where no sides seems to be able to carry out a successful final offensive, the intensity of military operations still have remained on high level. Artillery shelling of densely inhabited areas supposed to be under control of the enemy, air strikes of government's warplanes and helicopters, cleanses operated both sides are just some of the violent activities part of the day to day life of the country has been suffering since March 2011. Recently, the average death toll is around 100 people killed by clashes every day, and in the month the total number of casualties reached 40,000. According to Violations Documentation Centre, the most deadliest cities are Homs and the capital Damascus, fighting have claimed about 7,000 lives each locations, but these numbers contain only those whose death was proved by video or his ID card.



Free Syrian Army soldier with AK47. Photo: Scott Bobb [Voice of America News]

As a result of the cruel civil war not just the number of victims increases, but also the number of those who are dependant of support coming abroad. Peter Maurer head of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said the organization can not cope with the situation worsening every day. As a response to the challenge, Red Cross has improved its transportation and logistics of humanitarian aid, but this even can not guarantee the expected access of food and medicine for Syrians. A further matter of the Red Cross is that – under statements of Geneva Conventions regarding to the treatment of prisoners of war – the organization's task is to supervise prisons and conditions of detention in crisis areas to ensure human rights and support for jailed people. They try to gain access to these facilities in Syria, but they have to request approval of authorities in Damascus to accomplish these visits. Aiming to make Red Cross-Syria dialogue more effective, President Assad assigned an army officer to establish a direct communication path between the government and the organization.

According to John Ging operations director of UN humanitarian office, 2.5 million Syrians are in need of assistance inside the country, but organizations could not reach more than 1.5 million. An estimated number

of refugees from Syria is about 400,000 and analyses projected estimated 300,000 more refugees in early next year. Funding is one of the key problems of the aid service because the amount available is just half of the needed.

In an interview released by Russian RT television on 8 November, President Bashar al-Assad rejected the idea floated by British Prime Minister David Cameron, that a safe passage guaranteed to Assad can end violence. He emphasized he is Syrian, who lives and dies in his homeland if it is necessary. Assad depicted himself as a Syrian patriot and the provider of stability and secularism in the region, and warned a foreign intervention “will affect the world from the Atlantic to the Pacific.”



Free Syrian Army soldiers being transported by pick up truck. Photo: Rudi Bakhtiar [VOA News]

One of the most important issues of the Syrian rebels is to make up a body representing Syrian people international levels to achieve support to defeat the regime. But it is not an easy matter while the opposition is divided both inside and outside the country. Former Member of Syrian Parliament Riad Seif, now is a political dissident claimed the necessity of

a real Syrian representation of anti-Assad forces. Prominent figures including opposition leaders and delegates of countries of the international forum “Friends of Syria” held their meeting in Doha, to realize this purpose. The real difficulty was to bring Syrian National Council into the cooperation. This group formed as a coalition of Syrian opposition in Istanbul with strong Turkish backing, and because it has no credibility among fighters in Syria its international respect is very limited. 22 of 60 seats of the new group were offered to them, but they found this unsatisfactory before the talks started.

Finally an agreement – involving Syrian National Council too – was signed on 11 November founding the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, a transitional government got diplomatic recognition from 11 states as sole legitimate representative of Syria during the month. 2 days later, France was the first Western country recognizing the new corporation, as it was the first in the case of the Libyan opposition as well, showing special interests of France – a former colonist of the region. A moderate imam Mooaz al-Khatib – who worked for several oil companies as geophysicist – was elected to president; Riad Seif and Suheir Atassi serve as Vice Presidents of the coalition. The leaders expect the new situation can boost the foreign diplomatic and also military support of the rebels. The coalition can act as a real government – even it is in exile – to topple Assad and it has the right to obtain military equipment too.

But European countries bound by EU embargo banning such support of both sides in the Syrian conflict are still hesitant to deliver weapons to the opposition. They claimed some guarantees ensuring their support will flow to the right hands. Meanwhile some Gulf states support directly the rebels, even with arms, while Russia – the most important ally of Assad – is

alleged to assist the pro-government forces. Moscow's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov rejected these efforts of the Syrian National Coalition, and said it would strengthen extremists and terrorists.

Videos posted on internet prove that war crimes were committed by both sides in Syria and this fact increasing sensitivity of the issue on direct military shippings.



Historic photo of National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces members in Doha, Qatar. Photo: Syrian National Coalition [Flickr]

**“FOREIGN INTERVENTION WILL AFFECT
THE WORLD FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC”**

Goma in the hands of rebels for 10 days

A new wave of violence got control over the eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo during the second half of November. The government and the mutinied rebel group called M23 – named after the date of 23 March, 2009, the day of a failed agreement between National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) and the government – blamed each other causing the break out of the aggression again. On 15 November members of the regular army of the country held off attacks under air support of heavily armed helicopters belong to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), but M23 took advance day by day and got close to Goma, capital of North Kivu province. As a result of their new offensive, rebels forced government troops back and captured the city Kibumba, 30 kilometres from Goma, but their spokesman Vianney Kazarama told Reuters, M23 had no willingness to take Goma rather they called Kinshasa to launch peace negotiations with them. The same day government troops and staff of administration left the city closed by M23 troops. Siege of the city began on 19 November and it fell into the hands of rebels about noon next day. Tens of thousands of the inhabitants of Goma had



M23 rebels on a truck in the streets of Goma, after they captured it in November 2012
Photo: VOA

left before the rebels reached the outskirts and tried to find shelters around the city slightly guarded by just a couple of soldiers loyal to the government. After the assault became successful, people fled to the south or took refuge in Rwanda, on the other side of the border. Hundreds of UN peacekeepers were ordered to the city but they did not participate in fighting, they did not want to substitute forces of the national army, as official statements said.

President of DR Congo Joseph Kabila called people in Goma to resist against rebels and asked “the entire population to defend our sovereignty” in his televised speech. The advance of M23 tightened tensions between the government and neighbouring country Rwanda accused supporting the rebels. Kinshasa formerly urged, the fall of Goma will sharpen relations of the countries. Rwanda denied his involvement and blamed the army of

Congo fired the Rwandan border town of Giseny with various weapons, leading the death of 3 civilians. Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo stated they reject possibility of a military intervention as a revenge operation to respond this provocation. Rwanda encourages peace efforts conducted by the UN, but Congo declared it just wants to deceive international community and the shelling of Giseny was arranged by Rwanda itself to give reason to participate directly in the issue. To prevent clashes and to make UN's stand clear, Ban Ki-moon Secretary General emphasized "territorial integrity of



M23 rebels withdraw from Goma after it captured the city in November 2012
Photo: Gabe Joselow [VOA]

the Democratic Republic of the Congo is inviolable and must be fully respected by all neighbouring countries." But Rwanda has strong interests in the region the rebellion takes place. In association with Kinshasa's weak power over it, Rwanda and even Uganda set up illegal networks in the common border region and gaining influence on the area rich in mineral resources. Many high level M23 commanders are Tutsis, the ethnic group of Rwandan elite holding political and economic life of the country and this ethnicity is also overrepresented in the

army of Rwanda. Despite its series of denial, Rwanda's backing of the rebels became more and more evident. Goman citizens remarked the phenomenon of trucks loaded with military equipment left towards the border with Rwanda, and the event can be explained as an effort to clear away proofs of the assistance. They also spotted out rebel fighters wearing combination of Rwandan and common uniforms of the movement. Steve Hege coordinator of a UN investigation panel wrote a letter to the committee of the Security Council and asserted Rwandan soldiers directly entered Congolese territory through an official border crossing point and helped M23 capturing Goma. Because of the growing evidence of its double-dealing policy, Western allies of Rwanda suspended the transactions of their aid to Rwanda. The UK halted its 33 million US dollar subsidy, government of Kigali is very much in the need of to keep the country away from financial breakdown.



Map: Location of North Kivu Province in DR Congo (Goma is the capital of the province)

But these actions could not ease sufferings of those left in Goma. After the rebels' takeover, home invasions, carjacking, killings and many other kind of violence were reported from the city. M23 also reformed the police here allowing only ethnic Tutsis to carry guns. UN peacekeepers evacuated some magistrates to prevent their assassinations, but murders of real or suspected enemies of M23 continued. On the day of the occupation, the rebels held a conference in a stadium of Goma inviting policemen and pro-government soldiers. They offered impunity those who switch sides, and approximately 3,000 did so. On 22 November a counterattack of the regular army ended with the success of rebels much better equipped and motivated than forces of Kinshasa.

In the end of November peace talks between the parties intensified under mediation of Aronda Nyakairima Chief of Defence Forces of Uganda, and M23 agreed on withdraw its troops from recently



M23 troops in Bunagana
Photo: Al Jazeera English (Flickr)

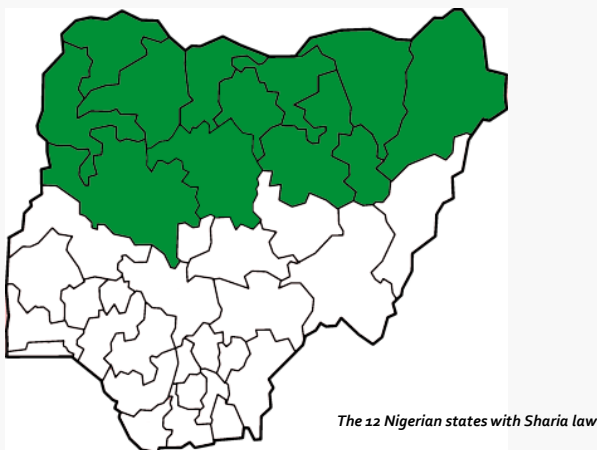
captured territories including Goma. The deal took Goma under control of “natural forces” comprising one battalion of the M23, one of the government and may some foreign troops, such as Ugandans. The group has to guarantee rest in the city and operation of the airport, main exporter of minerals of the region.

On 1 December rebels started drawing out their soldiers from Goma chanting “we are leaving, but we will be back soon” during their leaving.

“TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO IS INVIOABLE”

Clashes of religions in Nigeria

The most populous African country is in the frontline of conflicts between religious, ethnic and political groups for decades and these cases show a violent intolerance which led the entire country lost in the cycle of revenge. Plateau State, east from the capital is hit deeply by sectarian attacks and once the region was celebrated as “The Home of Peace and Tourism”, now it is rather famous from Muslim-Christian atrocities. On 27 November 10 people died after gunmen opened fire indiscriminately on the customers of a pub in the village of Heipang, which has a Christian majority population. As eyewitness reports portrayed, the perpetrators were dressed



The 12 Nigerian states with Sharia law

as soldiers and their van used to leave the scene was also suspected to belong to the national army. Later a military spokesman rejected any kind of involvement of the

armed forces in this attack and noted criminals often wear uniforms during their actions. Despite no one claimed responsibility for the deed and the religion of the victims is still not clear, authorities blamed Boko Haram carried out the outrage. This group's purpose is to create an Islamist independent country of the Muslim dominant Nigerian territories and to introduce Islam law instead of the present law system. To achieve this goal they arranged many attacks on security officers, officials and Christian targets. The government launched a harsh military campaign to wipe these terrorists up, but these efforts added just further violence to the northern states, while the organization has not been weakened yet. Analyses taken by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations highlighted many times these operations include murders, torture and different kind of law enforcements of the army trying to stop Boko Haram and its supporters. As a response, Muslim militants often use camouflage dresses – some of them are the official uniforms of the army, some of them are just similar – to cast suspicion of their own attacks upon the army and to reflect badly on the government's prestige. Nigerian religious clashes – often called Sharia conflict in simple words – are a

deterrent vision for those countries where the former Christian dominant population turns to a Muslim majority community and the changes are expected to be followed by the transformation of existing establishments. Since 1999, Nigeria is the prototype of these cases, where 9 of its consisting 36 states have introduced Sharia as main source of legislation, and it also has validity among Muslims in three other northern states. Double suicide bombings killed at least 11 people and wounded dozens in Kaduna state. A bus loaded with explosive device drove into the side of the St. Andrew Military Protestant

Church in Jaji barracks soon after the service had started in the building. Ten minutes later the second detonation took place outside the facility. The bomb was hidden into a parking car and aimed those who tried to help injured ones of the first attack. This kind of delayed blast method spread among terrorist groups want to realize the maximum damage of state and government related organizations and their staff.



Igbo Roman Catholics. Photo: Eric Chan [Flickr]

Nigeria: Trapped in the cycle of violence

This is the title of Amnesty International's in-depth report which was published on 1 November. Despite of the accusation of the organization and many others the government does not seem to withdraw its security forces from the north-eastern part of the country. Violence started escalating in 2009 when the Islamist militant group Boko Haram began a struggle for the expansion of Islamic law all across Nigeria. The government defines this group as a group of terrorists and carry out a harsh military campaign – especially in the northern regions. The authorities try to hush up the issue and eliminate responsibility. As Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the Finance Minister underlined they use all tools to curb terrorist attacks on their civilians, as all the other countries do.

Nearly 50 people were shot dead in the city of Maiduguri by the armed forces in an operation. Many people were collected then taken to the field and after a scanning process dozens of them got shot – as numerous eyewitnesses describe desperately the situation.

The report recommends to the president and the military to respect human rights and stop law enforcements by their forces and encourage Nigeria's partners of the international community to support the government achieve the recommendations. The analysis has just a brief expectation of Boko Haram to cease any form of violence immediately.

Al-Shabaab stroke back in Kenya

The East-African country suffered a series of attacks during the month caused the death of 6 security servicemen and many civilians. On 4 November a policeman was killed and 11 people were wounded – including some other police officers too – after a grenade was thrown on a church in Garissa, Eastern Kenya. Two weeks later a minibus was bombed by a grenade in Eastleigh, a neighbourhood of Nairobi. The number of casualties varies between 5 and 9, and 24 people needed hospitalization. The next day three soldiers were shot dead after a gunman attacked them by surprise while they were changing the flat tyre of their military vehicle. This assassination took place in Garissa, in the eastern region of Kenya, in the same town where a shooting – which details have not been divulged by the authorities – killed two policemen 4 days before.

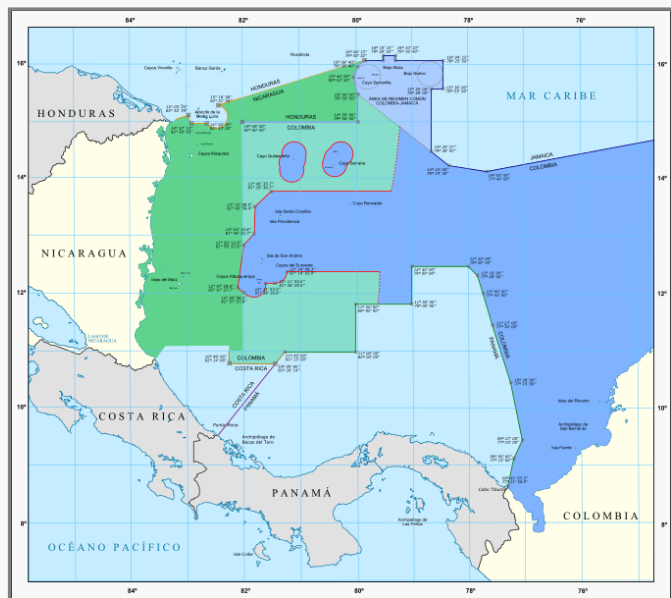
Meanwhile extended riot burst out between the Kenyan and the Somali ethnic groups of Eastleigh, which part of the capital is commonly known as “Little Somalia” referring to its population has Somali majority. The Kenyan people blamed Somalis for the recurring violence which led to severe clashes of the groups. These collisions push Kenya closer and closer to a civil war, and the Somali border region with the city of Garissa where Somalis have majority, the actions of armed groups are common occurrence.

Tensions between the two ethnic communities have been rising as a result of the Kenyan troops' intervention in Somalia and the reflective terrorist blasts carried out by the Somalia-based Islamist militia called Al-Shabaab. Since its gunmen executed many crimes inside Kenya – such as kidnapping tourists and aid workers – Nairobi decided to participate with its army directly in the Operation Linda Nchi. The offensive of an international coalition contained Somali government troops, French, Ethiopian and Kenyan forces aiming to terminate Al-Shabaab's hegemony over South-Somalia. Despite the 8-months military action ended in June, Nairobi still has military presence in Somalia as Kenyan soldiers are part of the AMISOM (African Union Mission to Somalia) corps, another international peacekeeping mission. The militia started a terror campaign to induce Kenya to withdraw its troops, which country is greatly interested in the success of efforts intending to restore rest and stable governance in its neighbour, Somalia.

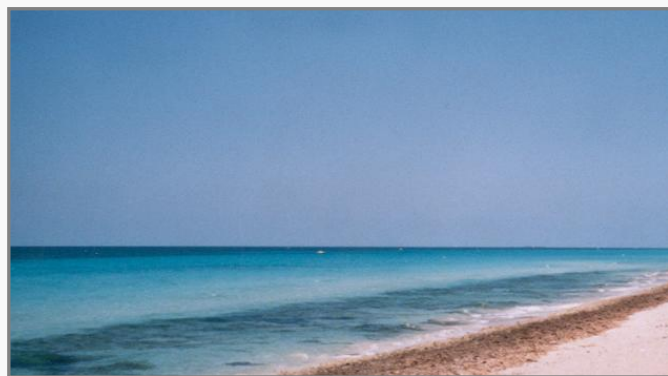


Scramble for oil in the Caribbean

The International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled in the case of some tiny islets located in the middle of the Caribbean Sea about 775 kilometres from Colombia and 230 kilometres from the coast of Nicaragua. The latter country filed in its territorial claim in 2001, but after a decade of disputes the ruling did not satisfied both concerned parties. The decision on 20 November redrew the border and gave more maritime areas to Nicaragua, but the islets and their nearby shelf seas remained under Bogotá's influence. This sharing of



the archipelago is considered as a consensus of the claims and showed the court's willingness to offer an acceptable ending for the long-lasting case. Nicaragua



welcomed the ruling which provided it more territories and some access of the area's rich natural resources can gain the economy of the mainland's eastern shore. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos criticised the statement of the court and said it is wrong and contradictory and blamed it gave Nicaragua what belongs to Colombia, and made it clear that his country will do all efforts available under international law to defend its own interests. Later he also added the ruling jeopardize Colombia's unity and noted the territorial disputes between countries can not be solved by such rulings, these issues need solutions based on bilateral agreements of the parties. Bogotá also ordered its navy forces located those areas granted to Nicaragua not to leave their position. At the same time Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega sent their military ships to these waters to represent Managua's sovereignty. But Colombia

seems more determined to fight for its rights over the area and decided to leave Pact of Bogotá to tackle the unfavourable situation. The pact signed in Bogotá in 1948 – officially The American Treaty of Pacific Settlement – aimed to promote peaceful means on territorial disputes and obliges its members to respect the decisions of the International Court of Justice. As a result of this Colombia denounced this treaty on 28 November to expand its spectrum of legal opportunities.

The affiliation of the archipelago is problematic since the 19th century independence of the states from the Spanish Empire. According to a bilateral treaty from 1928, the islands are under Colombian supremacy, however Nicaragua turned in its claim to modify this status to the International Court of Justice, but in the end it ruled the former treaty was valid.



*Juan Manuel Santos Calderón President of Colombia
Photo: Ministerio TIC Colombia [Flickr]*

The real importance of these rights is given by the hydrocarbon deposits of the seabed, but its exploitation's environmental side-effects can harm the close UNESCO biosphere reserve. The presence of Nicaraguan control of some waters affect badly on the small local population, who – as Colombian citizens – can no longer fishing freely in the region.

**“COLOMBIA WILL DO ALL EFFORTS AVAILABLE UNDER
INTERNATIONAL LAW TO DEFEND ITS OWN INTERESTS”**

Asian summits in Cambodia

On 17 November 2013, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) started its 21st annual meeting, where each 10 member countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) represented itself sending its head of state or head of government to Phnom Penh. As a result of the summit, the leaders signed a human rights agreement ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan described as a “major, major development... the leaders... committing themselves, every government, every country to the highest standards, existing and available.” But human rights organizations did not share satisfaction of the organization and formerly they highlighted the assignment of the document should be delayed, since it is not capable to fulfil its destiny in its present form. They criticised lack of transparency and showed the significant diversity of the accepting governments as an other problem. Phil Robertson Human Rights Watch's deputy Asia director said in an interview with AFP reporter, the new commitment can not reach the internationally accepted standards, and it establishes new loopholes justifying abuses of human rights and people of ASEAN member states.

On 20 November this meeting turned into a wider forum of dialogue as non-ASEAN members of South- and East-Asia and of the Pacific gathered to Cambodia, forming the 7th East-Asia Summit. The Chairman's statement reaffirmed achieved agreements of cooperation of the participants, welcomed proposals of new roundtables, noted with satisfaction the progress in cooperation in the six priority areas: environment and energy, education, finance, global health issues and pandemic diseases, natural disaster mitigation and ASEAN connectivity. It also respected the regional efforts to strengthen maritime cooperation enhancing security of waters, freedom of fishing and shipping. In fact maritime issues are so sensitive in this region, that clashes of interests blocked greatly the realization of new important



economic agreements during the summit. There are two ongoing disputes: the more widely known of these is the issue of the tiny Senkaku Islands in the East-China Sea led to a diplomatic alienation between China and Japan. The second claim is a matter of maritime territories in the South-China Sea rich in fishing resources and energy carriers. Besides these economic considerations, the political importance of these waters is given by the fact, that busy shipping lanes with cargo estimated value 5 trillion dollars in every year – half of global cargo shipping in weight – locates here.



Five of ASEAN members concerned directly the long-lasting and widespread issue of both maritime boundaries – such as in the region of the Gulf of Tonkin or around the Indonesian Natuna Islands – and land claims of Spratly and Paracel Islands. Excepting coastal waters of Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines, China claims firmly the entire maritime territory of South-China Sea up to disputed Natuna Islands, and concerned in the Paracel Island issue among with Taiwan and Vietnam. Cambodia host of the summit and a convinced Chinese ally made an announcement expressing related ASEAN-members agreed on keeping the dispute under state to state negotiations with



Barack Obama at ASEAN Summit at Peace Palace in Phnom Penh on 20 November 2012

China and avoiding to cite the issue on multilateral level. Soon after this was published, Benigno Aquino President of the Philippines denied his country accepted such notion. In fact, they support ASEAN contra China talks on the territories, offering a complex solution of the problems. China's interest is to divide states of the organization and sign bilateral agreements, in this way it would take countries under pressure separately to achieve more favourable consensuses. This method provides an extended range of political and diplomatic manoeuvres for Beijing and offers the chance of a kind of ending of the issue within a reasonable time. To keep negotiations as close to this policy as possible, China rigidly rejects involvements of international institutions or other organizations helping managing the disputes.

As final act of his Asian tour, President Obama also joined the meeting and urged parties to suspend their debate on territories not to overshadow the necessary progress of economic and trade issues. The region plays significant role in global economy, so rest and free flow of

commerce is greatly important for customers and economy of the States. In accordance with this aim, Washington backs the efforts to terminate the issue increasing tensions in the region, and a solution in consistent with international law has to be found as soon as possible. But a US interference in solving the situation needs extreme caution as the whole problem has high sensitivity because the

United States stands by Japan in the Senkaku debate affected negatively on the relation of the two biggest economies.

Asia meets Europe

The 9th Asian-European Meeting officially themed “Friends for Peace, Partners for Prosperity” was held in the capital of Laos on 5-6 November. The conference organized in every second year since its founding in 1996 started with the admission of Bangladesh, Norway, Switzerland as new members of the forum of total 51 countries. Speeches of the informal discussion emphasized the cooperation of Eurasia, partnership of nations to promote security, human rights and economic progress. Special attention was devoted to financial and economic matters, but climate change, food and energy security and some cultural issues arose as well.



“MARITIME ISSUES ARE SENSITIVE IN THIS REGION”

“WASHINGTON BACKS THE EFFORTS TO TERMINATE THE INCREASING TENSIONS IN THE REGION”

■ News in Brief

Africa

Sierra Leone general election

■ After the 2007 notably disputed election, Ernest Bai Koroma the president in office was re-elected on 17 November. Koroma and its party, the All People's Congress won 58.7% and get 67 parliamentary seats of 112. The major rival Julius Maada Bio – a former military general – and the Sierra Leone People's Party defeated with 37.4% of the total votes. This was the third presidential election since the 11-year lasting civil war ended in 2002, and this one is considered a rather fair one according to the numerous observers delegated by the African Union, the British Commonwealth and the EU. The result shows the empowerment of the reigning political group and provides a certain level of stabilization of the highly aid-dependent country. Koroma pointed out the key factors of Sierra Leone's prospering future several times during his rally: enhance foreign investments and fight against corruption.

Somalia starts a new political era facing serious challenges

■ The new Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon introduced his new 10-member cabinet. But the real surprise caused by the person of leading foreign affairs. Fauzia Yusuf Haji Adan is the first female member of a Somali cabinet and described her inclusion as a historic milestone for both political progress of the country and even for Somali women. The first issue which puts her to the proof is the export of charcoal from the port of Kismayo, a key town of Somali international trade. Because of environmental impacts and to prevent Al-Shabaab (a rebel Islamist militant group linked to Al-Qaeda) getting fortune from this export, UN Security Council has banned this activity since February. Since early September Kenyan AMISOM (African Union Mission to Somalia) troops hold the port, but really do not care about controlling the shipments. However the ban has not been officially cancelled after Kismayo seized by pro-governmental international forces, the trade of charcoal now is a big opportunity to Somali businessmen who lobby heavily for the supervision of the regulation. On the other hand, AMISOM official stated that the peacekeeper's mandate does not include responsibility for controlling commercial merchant. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud claimed to keep the port closed until all of the questions on charcoal and Kismayo's trade have been solved. Because of the country has fallen apart the presidential order is not hold across Somalia, those regions where Al-Shabaab has strong presence the export of charcoal is an everyday activity. The head of foreign policy has to overcome the difficulties and manage the success of the ban throughout the pro-governmental ports, many of them are under the power of foreign AMISOM groups.

■ News in Brief

Africa

Mali intervention is on the horizon

■ On 12 November 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agreed on the use of an international company against the Touareg rebels and Islamists of the northern Mali region, who took control it after a joined offensive. However their operation was really successful – capturing all three important cities of the north: Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu – Touareg rebels aiming an independent Touareg state and Islam extremists (some of them are linked to Al-Qaeda) turned each other starting a cruel civil war. Now an allied army of 3,300 soldiers from West African states was established by the special summit of the ECOWAS in Abuja, Nigeria, and the expected number of forces is estimated about 5,500 involving some other countries not members of the organization. Progressed talks with South Africa and Algeria are undergoing on the purpose of a more capable army and the use of Algerians' experience on fighting against Islamist guerrillas. The strategy of the battalions was created in the association with EU and African Union experts, the only thing is needed before action is the approval of UN. As a result of the threat of the intervention, some respected leaders from Islamists and Touaregs renewed negotiation with the Malian government, but the parties are still far from consensus.



ECOWAS member states

■ News in Brief

Middle East

US drone under fire in the Gulf

■ The unmanned air vehicle was doing a routine surveillance flight over the Persian Gulf when two Russian-made Sukhoi Su-25 warplanes opened fire using their on-board dual-barrel cannons. The fighters belong to the Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran, an Islamist force besides the country's regular army, shows less efforts to avoid international confrontation. The unarmed Predator of the USAF was not hit by rounds and managed to return its base. As the drone offers an easy target for interceptors, the action of



the planes seems more like an attempt to discourage the States continuing such operations in the region. The incident happened on 1 November but became public just after the presidential election. According to Pentagon's declaration the drone did not entered Iranian territory and the attack took place in international airspace. Iran's statement insisted on it entered its airspace and stressed the military will give a decisive response to any attacks.



Iran tightens tension on Hormuz

■ The Revolutionary Guard Corps set a new naval base near Bandar Lengeh, the fifth one in the strait's region. The new port and its forces has the about 250 kilometres wide operational zone from Qeshm island – where new underground military facility complex was established early this year to host submarines – to the region of Kish island. Armed conflicts of the last decades focused the country's military capabilities to the inner regions of the Gulf, but recently it relocates part of its naval forces

closer to the pass, the only entry and exit point of the Gulf. The geopolitical agenda was revised as Tehran started threatening with the blockade of the Strait to cut crude oil supplement of the West opposing its nuclear programme.

■ News in Brief

Middle East

Blasts across Iraq

■ A string of explosions killed 29 people and wounded 126 on 27 November in the country. Three of the car bombings took place in the northern city of Kirkuk, next to a market, a fuel station and near the local office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The region has a mixed population of Kurds, Shiite and Sunni Arabs and Turkmens. Control over this oil-rich territory is a matter of dispute between federal government and the Kurdistan regional government. Two bombs exploded in Anbar province killing 6, and 3 blasts put 19 people to death in attacks targeting Shiite mosques in Baghdad. In a new wave of attacks bombings of Shiites in Hillah and Karbala killed 39. Sunnis and the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda often attack Shiites, and the intensity of the bloodshed is connected with the ongoing Shiite commemorating ceremonies on the anniversary of Imam Hussein, a martyr of Shia Islam.



November 2012 Iraqi bombings

Blasts in Bahrain

■ According to the police's statement two home-made exploding devices caused the death of 2 and seriously injured a third people in the capital. The authority reported five bombings across the city, one of the blasts happened when a man kicked a device in Gudaibiya neighbourhood of Manama, other took place in Adliya, in the multicultural bohemian district. Reports said the victims were Asian foreign workers, but their nationality has not been published, and just supposed to be Indians, Pakistanis or Bangladeshis. The investigation is going on, but the government determined it as terrorist attack, which can be a sign of escalating violence caused by protests. Members of the opposition criticised the police published very few details of the attacks and raised the subject that the whole issue was carried out by the authorities and the explosions may did not happen at all.



■ News in Brief

International Law

Abu Qatada released in Britain

■ The Jordanian citizen Palestinian Muslim cleric won his appeal at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission and the ruling ends his detention started in 2001. He set free on restrictive bail conditions on 12 November, and the court upheld his appeal on deportation to Jordan where he would not get a fair proceedings. But in this particular situation, both countries eager to keep him jailed as he is regarded as a dangerous ideological supporter of suicide attacks of Muslims and holds strong connection with mujahideen movements. In his absence Jordanian tribunal found him guilty on terrorism related to the attacks of Western and Israeli targets in 1998-1999. Since then, the Constitution of Jordan was changed to ban the use of evidence obtained by torture, and the government said he would receive a new, fair retrial if he transported to the Middle Eastern kingdom. Britain and Jordan cooperate closely in fields of diplomacy and justice to incarcerate the cleric in either country.

Ramush Haradinaj acquitted in The Hague

■ The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) acquitted Haradinaj and two other former Kosovan guerrilla commanders, and cleared all their war crime charges related to the cruel Serbian-Kosovan incidents in 1998-1999. The accused were military officers of the Kosovan Liberation Army, and Haradinaj was the self-declared independent country's Prime Minister for 100 days in 2005 but resigned because of the court's first accusation which exempted him in 2008, but the charge was refreshed via a partial retrial. The court's ruling not just acquitted them finding no evident linkage connect them to the crimes against humanity committed on Serbs, but also declared Haradinaj made severe efforts to stop such actions. The verdict fortified the fame of Haradinaj, who is a national hero and has many supporters among Albans of the Balkan and seems to be ready to return to Kosovo's political palette.



■ News in Brief

Internal Affairs

Algerian army plane crash

■ The military transport plane crashed in the south of France near the historic city of Avignon. It landed on an uninhabited area caused no casualties on ground, but all six people aboard considered dead, remains of four of them were found by the members of local fire brigade. The plane was flying return to home from Paris carrying military officials, bank notes and a representative of the Bank of Algeria. So far no information on the reason of the disaster of 9 November has been officially reported by French or Algerian spokesmen, but a group of technical experts said to be established to investigate the issue. The plane was a C-295 two-propelled tactical transporter made in Spain by Airbus Military, a business unit of the joint European Airbus company, based in Blagnac, Toulouse, 270 kilometres westwards from the scene of the disaster.

BP's record fines

■ On 15 November British Petrol announced an agreement with the U. S. Department of Justice paying 4 billion dollars in instalments during the following 5 years to end all its charges of the Deepwater Horizon disaster. The company pleaded guilty to terminate these legal issues which have no real chance to win. It also settled to pay 525 million dollars to the Securities and Exchange Commission, because of the charge of misleading investors with false statements. The accident killed 11 workers of the oil rig and caused huge offshore oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, damaging the environment and the economy of the area. Because of the company's behaviour during handling the crisis, Washington imposed a ban which suspends BP winning new contracts from the government.



■ News in Brief

Internal Affairs

Scandal in Langley

■ David Petraeus Director of CIA offered his resignation to the President during a meeting on 8 November. The 60-year old 4-star general was the chief of the intelligence service since September 2011, but decided to left office because of personal reasons. The next day, President Obama accepted his resignation, and the position is temporarily held by Michael Morell as Acting Director, who has been the Deputy Director of the organization since May 2010. According to Petraeus's letter released to the CIA, he decided to resign because of extramarital affair, writing "Such behaviour is unacceptable". Some analysts took crucial attention to the timing of his act which happened just after the election of the United States, and they also pointed out the reason beyond the scene could be the attack on US consulate in Benghazi on 11 September killing 4 Americans including Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. The assault is considered widely as a big failure of the CIA, but Washington denied connection of the issues.

Colombian negotiators in Havana

■ Key negotiations of the Colombian government and the FARC rebels started a new round of negotiation trying to solve the internal conflict of the country have claimed thousands of lives since 1964. Their latest attempt is not a truce of forces, they gathered to find a final solution. Ivan Marquez representative of rebels took a significant gesture declaring a unilateral 2-month cease-fire started on night of 19 November, which means they suspended all of their military activities, attacks on forces of Bogotá or sabotage against infrastructural facilities. The government stated they did not accept this unilateral decision and their army will not join the rest until the final agreement was signed. The real issue of the negotiation process is the FARC's transformation from a rejected terrorist group to a respected political power claiming severe social and economic reforms – such as land distribution and ban of multinational companies' access to the Colombian natural resources – needed to be accepted by the government as important part of the deal.

■ News in Brief

International Relations

US President visited Myanmar

■ Barack Obama came a 6-hour visit to the Southeast-Asian country intending to support the partnership of the two nations. The host of the President was preceded by amnesty of more than 500 political prisoners as a gesture of President Thein Sein leader of the country. The top moment was Obama's speech at Rangoon University, in which he stated America helps Myanmar in its reforms and emphasized: for the sake of future and for the sake of humanity stopping the ongoing violence between ethnic and religion groups is necessary. Later he met pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who thanked the support of the United States. The country formerly called Burma started a steady transition two years ago, led by the military-backed but civilian government possessing limited influence on border regions deeply affected by atrocities. According to rights organizations hundreds of political activists left behind bars in spite of the amnesty, and political environment is still far from operating democracy.

Invasion of an island

■ The United States Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force carried out their regular military exercise between 5 and 16 November, involving roughly 50,000 personnel. The original task was to carry out a mock invasion of an uninhabited island in effective cooperation, but it was said to be revised because of geopolitical considerations. Operation Keen Sword was held on waters near the Japanese island Okinawa, famous from its huge US military bases. This place is just west of islands – named Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China – under territorial claims of both Asian powers and even of Taiwan. During the operation, Chinese and Taiwanese ships also appeared on these waters to represent their interests. Timing, placing and task of the manoeuvres were highly provocative and unfortunate, but also showed up the solid US-backing of Japanese forces.



Chinese propaganda poster showing the disputed islands



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