

"Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues"

Cultural Relations Policy

News and Background

January 2015





About CRP News & Background

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International reactions to Charlie Hebdo attacks



Protest sign in support of the victims. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

It has gone viral fast how the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo was the target of terrorist attacks on 7 January 2015, wounding 11 and leaving 12 dead: cartoonists, editors, police officers, an economist, a maintenance worker and a guest. The attacks were such a shock to France that the assault was called the worst since 1961, and online materials have compared the severity to that of 9/11. It is not the first time the magazine was the target of terrorist attacks: they have received death threats before for their offensive drawings about Prophet Muhammad, and their other caricatures about various other religions (e.g. Christianity) have been also harshly

criticised. This is the first time however that the reaction is this hostile. The attackers were identified as brothers by the name Kouachi, French citizens with Algerian descent. The attacks have been subjects to global condemnation, including hashtag activism and silent commemoration for the victims and reinforcement of the freedom of speech and press. It has been thoroughly debated as to who is responsible for the shooting aside from the two attackers and what motives – aside from the all too salient religious one – may have lead them: some argue that the Islamic State has been behind the training of the attackers to agitate Western societies against Muslims in order to push them towards radicalisation.

In response to the attacks, Europe has been giving various reactions: often against terrorism, sometimes against Islam, and even in general against immigration. Leaders of Western nations, such as British Prime Minister David Cameron have been speaking out to the global audience to “remain extremely vigilant”. Anti-terrorism has peaked for instance in Belgium as well where – as a reaction – suspected jihadists have been killed by a police operation.





Paris rally in support of the victims of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The group was returning from Syria which triggered caution in Verviers, eastern Belgium on 16 January, and when they opened fire on the police officers, they answered similarly.

The terror level in Belgium has been raised to three, the second largest, and the city stays under heavy police presence. In Niger, where protests took place against Charlie Hebdo which resulted in further deaths, 10 only in two days.

The Muslim demonstrators have burnt down churches and police cars, and attacked police stations. Although President Mahamadou Issoufou claimed he shared the disgust of the protesters, he harshly condemned their violence and said they “understood nothing of Islam”.

President Issoufou was one of the world leaders to march for France in Paris that paid tribute to the victims of the Charlie Hebdo attacks on the Saturday of January 11, 2015. The march had more than a million participants from all over the world not just Europe: for instance, Israel’s Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Mahmoud Abbas were also present. The march occurred in respectful silence to express appropriate and according solidarity with the victims and the ascribed values of Europe.



Paris rally in support of the victims of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Battle over Donetsk airport

The battle for the Donetsk airport was hoping to see a reluctant ceasefire as Ukrainian troops withdrew from the main terminal on 22 January 2015. The leaders of the rebels were called to an emergency meeting. Although the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany had issued a joint call earlier to agree on demarcation and withdrawal of troops, but – as it becomes clear – this had not been carried out, so it remained questionable whether the emergency meeting would prove to be effective.

However, due to civilian deaths on both sides of the war, the emergency meeting in Belarus was cancelled before it began. Rebel delegate Denis Pushilin said they were ready for more offensives to seize more territories to prevent the artilleries from damaging what is already theirs.

Due to the artillery and the shelling, the civilians of Donetsk are practically in



*Ruins of a plane at Donetsk Airport.
Photo: Pravda DPR*

constant danger, but many of them cannot manage to flee. A shopkeeper claimed they were already “used to this”. According to United Nations estimates from 9 January 2015, 5.2 million people live in conflict-affected areas and 1.4 million more are highly vulnerable also. The Ukrainian crisis has demanded more than 4,800 victims and at least 10,322 injuries so far.

Russia presses for gas pipeline with Turkey

The South Stream was cancelled in December 2014 – the long-planned project was supposed to run under the Black Sea towards Europe via Southern European countries and avoiding post-Soviet ones. Now Moscow hopes to build energy relations with Turkey instead. It is difficult to say whether Russia was bluffing to ease the sanctions of Europe or means to accept its geopolitical opportunities.



Controlled borders fuels violence

The civil war in Syria has its negative effect on Lebanon such as the large numbers of refugees arriving. On January 5 Lebanon rendered its immigration controls at the Syrian border more rigorous. The new immigration control is intended to decrease the number of incoming Syrian refugees. According to local people there were thousands of refugees crossing the border

Nations refugee agency is concerned about the status of the refugees under the new law.

Another effect of the Syrian civil war is the repeated violent actions occurring in Lebanon. The country was targeted by several attacks the latest of which happened on January 10 in the city of Tripoli. A suicide bomber is responsible for

“There are over a million Syrian refugees living in Lebanon out of the population of around 4.5 million people”

the day before the new rules but on the next day there was almost no movement. There are over a million Syrian refugees living in Lebanon out of the population of around 4.5 million people.

According to the new immigration rules immigrants are obliged to apply for one of the six types of visas that are the following: tourist, transit, medical, student, business and short stay, each of which depends upon specific documentation. The United

this attack which left at least seven people dead. The Lebanese political leaders of different sides emphasised the need for unity. The terrorist groups have to be isolated as stated by the Shi'ite group Hezbollah.

The situation is far from peaceful on the Israeli border as well. Israeli people who live close to the Lebanese and Syrian borders are seriously worried about the Hezbollah digging underground tunnels on Israeli





Refugee camp in Lebanon.
Photo: Österreichische Außenministerium

territory. Several home recordings were disclosed where sounds of banging and digging were coming out of sinkholes. The Israel Defence Forces' convoys were attacked by the Hezbollah on January 28 as an answer to an Israeli incursion in Syria

in early January. United Nations peacekeepers were also killed in the fight, which led to the considerable worsening of the situation.

The IDF claims that the Hezbollah is seeking for war but according to the leader of the Lebanese group the Hezbollah "did not seek war with Israel but was prepared for it, and reserved the right to respond to Israeli attacks."

Indeed the Hezbollah has the technique for using tunnels for years since the Lebanon war in 2006. They are able to create a hundred miles long channel system in a few months. The immediate consequences of the recent tunnelling are hitting the locals who are complaining about constantly losing their business.

Lebanon and Syria were prompted by Israel

Israel is getting more concerned about a possible attack of the Hezbollah or other groups therefore equipment and troops were allocated to the northern border. On January 23 in hope of avoiding vengeance for a former Israeli air strike in Syria Israel prompted both Syria and Lebanon not to grant permission for any attacks on Israel from their territory.

The Israel-Hezbollah fighting has not ceased

On January 28 an Israeli military convoy was attacked by Hezbollah in the Sheba Farms area. According to the information of the Israel Defence Forces an officer and a soldier died during the incident and another seven Israeli soldiers were injured. In addition the fights between Israel and the Hezbollah resulted in the death of a Spanish service member of The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Most probably a fire from Lebanese side caused his death even though the investigation still has not made it clear. On the same day the Israeli military position in Mount Hermon was attacked by the Hezbollah from Syrian ground. The Israeli army responded with airstrikes on Syrian targets.



ISIS violence goes on



Kurdish fighters planting a flag near Kobane. Photo: VOA

The actions of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in order to build a worldwide caliphate are watched all over the world. Several events took place in January: ISIS lost territory in Kobane, two Japanese hostages were killed and the jihadists hacked a number of social media websites from U.S. military command.

The siege of Kobane continues as Kurdish fighters succeeded to capture a strategic hill in the city after several fights against ISIS. According to The Observatory 11 ISIS militants were executed and a large amount of weapons and ammunition were seized, however on Kurdish side there were victims as well. By taking over the hill without any long-range weapons, the Kurds display their capability to fight against ISIS

in the rural parts of the city. The Mishtenur hill overlooks the besieged town, where Kurdish militants and ISIS are battling since September 2014. Kurds are trying to regain control of the Syrian city on the border with Turkey as Islamic State wants to conquer Kobane. Currently the city is for the main part destroyed. Since the beginning of this battle hundreds of people have been killed and over 200,000 inhabitants have fled Kobane and took refuge in Turkey. Moreover, Kurdish units are recently supported by anti-IS strikes, organized by the US-led coalition.

On January 20 ISIS uploaded an online video with "a message to the government and people of Japan". The images show



Kurdish refugee children from Kobane in Suruc, Turkey. Photo: Yannis Vasilis Yaylali



two Japanese hostages in a well-known setting: a desert landscape, orange overalls and an executioner in black disguise. The masked speaker – believed to be “Jihadi John” – threatens to kill Haruna Yukawa and Kenji Goto if the Japanese government does not pay 200 million dollars within 72 hours. Days ago the same amount was promised by Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe for non-military assistance for countries battling Islamic State. For the first time an ISIS online video demands cash in exchange for the lives of captives. Kenji Goto is an independent journalist who travelled to Syria to tell stories about lives destroyed by the war. Haruna Yukawa is CEO of a private security company and he joined the Free Syrian Army while being in Syria. The video was directly addressed to Japan. In that way the Asian country gets intensely involved in the global fight against ISIS, as Japan provides humanitarian aid in the Middle East and never participated in military action against ISIS unlike United States and other powers. After the video Japan confirmed his co-operation with the US-led coalition and stated they will keep providing food and medical help. ISIS

militants uploaded another video, titled “the countdown has begun”, containing a montage of previous executions. According to the Japanese government they worked hard to release the two captives. Chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga stated that “since the beginning of the incident, Japan has been trying to use all kind of means and to do our best to save their lives by using our diplomatic route, as much as possible”.

Furthermore the Japanese government established a responsible person who will try to bring the hostages in safety. He visited King Abdullah from Jordan, who would try to negotiate with ISIS. Days later, an ISIS movie appeared in which Kenji Goto is holding a picture of the beheaded body of the other Japanese hostage Yukawa. American president Barack Obama stated the US ‘strongly condemns the brutal murder of Japanese citizen Haruna Yukawa by the terrorist group ISIS’. Moreover the jihadists distributed a video in which they threaten to execute Kenji Goto and Jordanian pilot Maaz al-Kassasbeh. He is kept as a prisoner by ISIS since December 24 after crashing with his F-16. ISIS also demands the release of Iraqi prisoner Sajida

“The Asian country gets intensely involved in the global fight against ISIS, as Japan provides humanitarian aid in the Middle East and never participated in military action against ISIS”





Emblem of ISIS. Picture: Wikimedia Commons

al-Rishawi. She is held since 2006 in a Jordanian prison for terror attacks, where she is sentenced to death.

The Japanese government announced that it will try to obtain the release of Goto in co-operation with Jordan.

One week after the video with Goto holding a picture of the corpse of Yukawa, ISIS distributed a new movie. It appears to show the beheaded body of Goto. The release of the video has created shockwaves across the country, forcing the Japanese government to heighten security measures to prevent further terroristic attacks.

ISIS's quest to create an Islamic state in Iraq and Syria attracts – mainly young – men from across Europe to join their bloody battle. According to the European police more than 5,000 European Union citizens are fighting side by side with ISIS. Most men pose a threat to their countries of origin if they return as they have the potential and capability to organize terroristic attacks. Approximately 30 per cent has returned to their EU home country. Chief of Europol Rob Wainwright calls for more control and regulation of the internet, as terrorists use social media to recruit fighters in a more aggressive way.

ISIS hacks Twitter US military command

To spread their propaganda ISIS frequently organizes hack attacks. On January 12 ISIS followers hacked the Twitter and YouTube accounts of the US military command that controls the operation in the Middle East. The cyber-jihadists posted messages as “American soldiers, we are coming, watch your back, ISIS” on the Twitter account. These hacked messages could be seen for approximately 30 minutes. The Defense department takes the attack seriously and started an investigation. It stated that “operational military networks were not compromised and there was no operational impact”. At the same moment of the cyber-attack, President Barack Obama proposed new measurements to enforce the American cyber security after several hacking incidents.



Saudi Arabia's "reformer" king Abdullah dies



Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Photo: Whitehouse.gov

On January 23 the king of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud died at the age of 90 and the Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, who turns 80 this year, was appointed as the new king.

Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud had been running the State since 1996 and was not only the key US ally in the Middle East, but

also supported the Arab Peace Initiative to solve the long-lasting conflict between Israel and Palestine. Known as a "reformer" and "the most progressive and liberal minded King", Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud invested in education and infrastructure projects. In coalition with the US, Saudi Arabia crushed al-Qaeda and fought the ISIS groups in Iraq and Syria. With the death of such an open-minded ruler, one of the biggest questions is – what's next? The world's largest oil exporter is facing new challenges threatening its dominance in oil and influence in the Middle East. While smooth shift of power was accomplished despite over 30 heirs and many posts have been distributed within 24 hours, the transition happened at an inconvenient and rough time for the country. The threat of ISIS and rising influence of Iran would require a share of an oil market with other suppliers. The newly assigned King already claimed an intention to continue the current policy of squeezing out high-cost production from the oil markets to drive down oil prices. At the same time, to cement the popularity among ordinary Saudis, new social programs are required.



Intensifying attacks by Boko Haram

Founded in 2002, Boko Haram started the insurgency since 2009 aiming at creation of an Islamic state in the North-East of Nigeria. Since then, the region remains one of the most attacked regions of the country.

The beginning of the year saw the continuation of Boko Haram's massacre in the North-East of Nigeria. On New Year's Eve the militants raided Malari village in

states in 2013. Borno state remains the most affected by insurgency as 70 percent of it are controlled by Boko Haram while the Baga town became "virtually non-existent" after its military base was attacked and almost the entire town had been torched. Government troops abandoned the military base and the militants took under control 16 towns after military retreated.

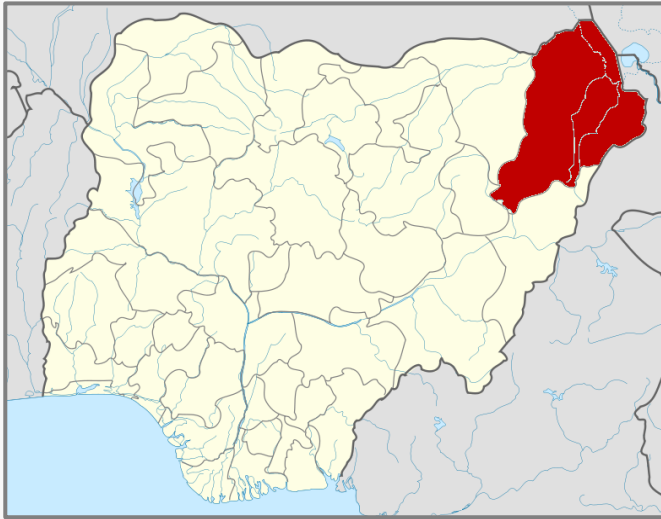
“The senator of Northern Borno reported that thousands of people flee to Chad and the humanitarian crisis is rapidly evolving”

Borno state and have kidnapped around 40 boys and young men following the kidnap of 200 girls last year in the Gumsuri village. By now, more than 2000 are killed in the North-Eastern Nigeria while 1.5 million remain displaced. The increase of militant attacks in three Nigerian states – Borno, Adamava and Yobe – urged the government to declare a state of emergency in Borno and neighbouring

Maina Maaji Lawan, the senator of Northern Borno, reported that thousands of people flee to Chad and the humanitarian crisis is rapidly evolving.

Called by the Amnesty International as the “deadliest massacre”, Nigerian North-Eastern regions were continuously attacked by insurgents throughout the whole month. On January 2 the Maiduguri market in Borno state was attacked by a 10 years old





*Borno state of Nigeria.
Photo: Himalayan Explorer*

to be killed by Cameroonian troops as well as warfare equipment to be destroyed. Recent attacks on Cameroon come amidst the claims of a requirement to embrace Islam into the Constitution of the State. While the president of Chad agreed to provide military support to fight Boko Haram in Cameroon, the president of the latter has called for international military help to fight the Islamists. All these come along the crucial presidential and legislative elections planned on February 14, the obstruction of which might lead to more violence.

“girl bomber”. While no group claimed a responsibility, all signs point to Boko Haram as young girls became a part of a new militant strategy of the group. Similar vehicle explosion in Yobe at a checkpoint near police station took the lives of tens of people.

Furthermore, the attacks of Boko Haram extended to neighbouring states. As such, Cameroon’s military camp was attacked in the middle of January but was repelled and 143 Boko Haram fighters are claimed



A Cameroonian soldier. Photo: SSG Kaily Brown

Boko Haram in numbers

Number of members	Number of victims	Number of abductions	Number of refugees
7-10,000	At least 5,000	500	1,500,000



Pope Francis visits Sri Lanka and the Philippines

In January Pope Francis exchanged his beloved Vatican for a six-day tour to Asia. The official program contained a visit for three days in Sri Lanka, followed by three days in the Philippines. In less than six months after his trip to South Korea, the pope travelled to Asia for the second time during his papacy. As Asia is one of the most important growth regions of the Catholic Church, the pope hopes to attract new followers during his visit. Arriving in Sri Lanka, the pope was welcomed by ceremonial dancers from Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic groups and Sri Lanka's new president Maithripala Sirisena. Elections were held one week before the arrival of the pope and had a surprisingly outcome. President for ten years Mahinda Rajapaksa lost these elections due to his lack of popularity among ethnic and religious minorities. Winner Sirisena benefited from that and received the most votes, promising to increase respect for religious minorities.

Sri Lanka is still recovering from the civil war between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority, who fought for the creation of an independent state "Tamil Eelam". These two ethnic groups differ in religion, for



His Holiness Pope Francis in Sri Lanka. Photo: Prasanna Welangoda

the Sinhalese are predominately Buddhist and the Tamils are mostly Hindu. The conflict was brought to an end in 2009, when the government army defeated the





Crowd cheering Pope Francis in The Philippines. Photo: Benhur Arcayan

Tamils. Approximately 70 000 people died during 26 years of warfare. Both Sinhalese and Tamils are included in Catholicism, therefore the Church sees itself as a major source for national unity. Consequently the pope brought a message about interfaith harmony. He spoke the words: "only the truth can heal a country's wounds", implying it is impossible to fully recover from years of ethnic warfare without tracking the true facts about the committed injustices. Due to the increasing violence against Muslims by fundamentalist Buddhists, Pope Francis was challenged to open a greater dialogue among the Buddhists, Hindu, Muslims and Catholics in Sri Lanka. He aimed to encourage the local church to

find partners in peace, in order to unite against religious extremists. In the capital city Colombo the pope canonized Joseph Vaz, Sri Lanka's first-ever saint. Vaz was a missionary in the 17th century and responsible for the reviving the faith in Catholicism among Sinhalese and Tamils during the persecution by Dutch Calvinists. After his visit to Sri Lanka, the pope travelled to the Philippines, Asia's only majority Roman Catholic nation. Twenty years ago Pope John Paul II visited the Philippines, where five million people attended the papal gathering. This number pulverized as pope Francis attracted a record crowd of six million Filipinos to join to the outdoor mass in the capital city Manila. Meeting the survivors and victims of Super Typhoon Haiyan was the main reason for visiting the country. More than 7,300 inhabitants died or have been missing; moreover the typhoon destroyed a huge densely populated region. Themes as environment, poverty and family were included in the speech of the pope. In conclusion the Asian trip contained a central message about hope and warnings about poverty and corruption.

Pope names new cardinals from developing countries

Furthermore, one of the aims of the Church is reaching developing nations. The pope recently named twenty new cardinals from Asia, Africa and Latin America in order to make a stronger connection with the developing world. These candidates have a chance to become the successor of the pope. For the first time cardinals from Myanmar, Tonga and Cape Verde have been selected. By pointing out these new cardinals, the chances increase the next pope will be a non-European, like Pope Francis.

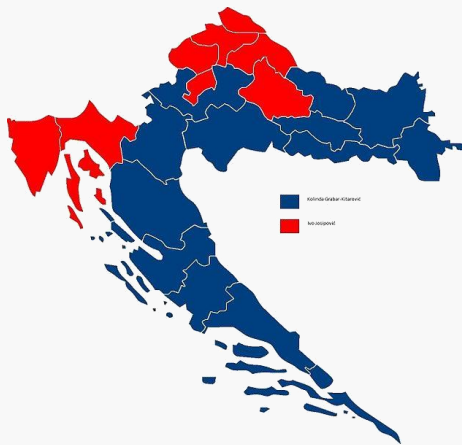


■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Croatia's first female president

■ This month, Croatia, the last member to become part of the European Union in 2013, welcomed the first female president of its history. After a close competition between Grabar-Kitarovic, representing the centre-right coalition HDZ party, and Josipovic, the president since 2010, representing the ruling centre-left coalition. The challenger won with the 50.5% of the votes, against the 49.5% of her opponent. The victory was contended between two strong candidates: Grabar-Kitarovic strong right-wing woman and former foreign minister; and Josipovic, a very popular president who could not stand the fact that the current centre-left government six year's rule was not able to face the economic crisis. Indeed, Croatia's unemployment rate is still around 20%. This election was also an anticipation of what we will expect from the next political elections.



Results of the elections – the winner marked with blue.
Map: Quahadi Añtó



President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Suicide bomber in Istanbul kills police officer

■ The police in Istanbul has been in the focus of suicide bombers lately: it is the second time in less than a week that they suffer an attack. This time, on a Tuesday, January 6 a suicide bomber with explosives attacked a police station; two police officers were wounded, one died from the attack. The earlier attack was acknowledged to be done by the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party, a leftist extremist military group, but it remains to be seen who or what was behind the suicide bomber of Tuesday.



Attacks in Baghdad

■ Large territories in Iraq have been taken by the Islamic State. Nonetheless, the Sunni militia is not satisfied. Indeed, in the last weeks, there were several bombings around Baghdad. Nineteen people died. Many Shiite militiamen that cooperated with the government to fight the IS were killed. One of the attacks took place in their headquarters. In a different attack, gunmen from a speeding vehicle killed three soldiers at a checkpoint of Abu Ghraib, in Western Baghdad. While the state has become a war zone, the government was able to approve the 2015 budget, largely based on the expected oil price. Conversely, the previous administration was not able to approve the 2014 budget.

Vietnam becomes more tolerant to gay people

■ Vietnam is the first south-eastern Asian country making a progressive step towards same-sex marriage by revising their marriage law. Regulations about “prohibiting marriage between people of the same sex” were removed. Currently 1.65 million Vietnamese lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders are allowed to marry, although the Vietnamese government does not officially accept it. Moreover the new marriage law aims to attract more gay travellers in order to boost the tourism industry.

“Currently 1.65 million Vietnamese lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders are allowed to marry, although the Vietnamese government does not officially accept it”

Cuba begun releasing political prisoners

■ Historical agreement signed in December 2014 by Cuba and the United States obliged each side to liberate political prisoners: 53 detainees from Cuba and 3 from the US. While the release of a USAID contractor Alan Gross promised further normalization of relations, liberation of other political prisoners is taking a slow pace. Meanwhile the names of released dissidents are not revealed and delays are debated to be either a matter of time or Cuba's untrustworthiness. At the same time, the US is also still addressing the prospects of liberating trade, financial transactions and travel permissions between two countries. Thus future steps are still to be discussed by diplomats from both sides.



Libyan warplane bombs Greek-operated oil tanker

■ A warplane, which belongs to the Libyan government, bombed a Greek oil tanker. Two people died during the attack, a Greek and a Romanian crewmember. Fortunately the 12,600 tonnes of oil did not leak out. Libyan military official claimed they suspected the tanker was transporting Islamist militants to Derna. Greece has contacted the authorities about the incident. The Greek government will do anything to find the attackers.



CH-47 of the Libyan air force. Photo: Rob Schleiffert

Ceasefire in Libya

■ After talks with the United Nations, Libya army declared a truce with the following conditions. Libyan armed forces spokesman Col. Ahmed Mesmari said the army will continue to monitor the transportation of weapons and ammunition. To pursue their obligations to protect the Libyan people, the soldiers can use their weapons in case they come under fire. They open passages up for humanitarian aid only. The UN's Libya mission gladly received the truce, saying it is an important contribution to the region's peace process; the crisis cannot be solved with militant force.



■ News in Brief

Bilateral relations

Arrests in Afghanistan after Pakistan school massacre

■ Five men were arrested in Afghanistan after being accused of involvement in a school massacre where 149 people – mostly children – died. Their role has not been clarified yet, but according to the information gained from Pakistan they have connections with the Taliban. The men had not been transferred to Pakistan yet, first there will be an interrogation by Afghan authorities.

North Korea is facing more sanctions for being involved in the Sony hack

■ After the hack attack on Sony Pictures' computer system right before releasing "The Interview" North Korea has to face more sanctions from January 2. Although North Korea refuses to admit taking part in the attack and there is no evidence of its involvement Washington has a "commitment to hold North Korea accountable for its destructive and destabilizing conduct." North Korea is sanctioned by the United States for over fifty years yet the financial sanctions do not seem as powerful as in other countries like Russia or Iran. The reason behind this is that North Koreans typically do not travel nor do they have millions of dollars in western banks.

“North Korea is sanctioned by the United States for over fifty years yet the financial sanctions do not seem powerful”

Outrage on Taiwan flag-raising ceremony

■ The flag-raising ceremony at Taiwan's de facto embassy in Washington caused an outrage in The United States. Since there is no full diplomatic relation between the countries, State Department said the ceremony violated a long-standing pact. Spokeswoman Jen Psaki emphasized that the US administration was not aware of the move. US and Taiwanese officials are examining the incident both in Washington and Taipei.



■ News in Brief

International relations

Start of Eurasian Economic Union

■ The new Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) started operating on January 1 and unites Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. The Union provides free flow of goods, workforce, and capital. Together with the Union were established the Eurasian Commission, the Court of the EEU, and the Eurasian Development Bank. The institutions are located in Moscow, Minsk, and Almaty, accordingly. While the accession treaty came into force in Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia, the ratification of the treaty in Kyrgyzstan will be enacted in May 2015 only despite great resistance among the population of the country due to increasing economic crisis in Russia as an aftermath of EU sanctions.



*Members of the Eurasian Economic Union marked with yellow.
Map: Wikimedia Commons*

Srebrenica: Verdicts of the War Crimes Tribunal

■ The UN Yugoslav tribunal, instituted to judge over the war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia during the 90s, just recently upheld the convictions of five men for their role in the Srebrenica massacre. Moreover, four other high-ranking officials were sentenced. They had appealed against the decision that found them guilty for a wide range of crimes, including genocide, in 2010. The Srebrenica massacre took place in three days of July in 1995, when more than 8,000 Bosnians were killed, after they tried to escape from the Serbian soldiers. Most of the convicted were reporting directly to the Bosnian Serb commander Ratko Mladic, one of the main responsables of the genocide, currently on trial at the tribunal in the Hague.



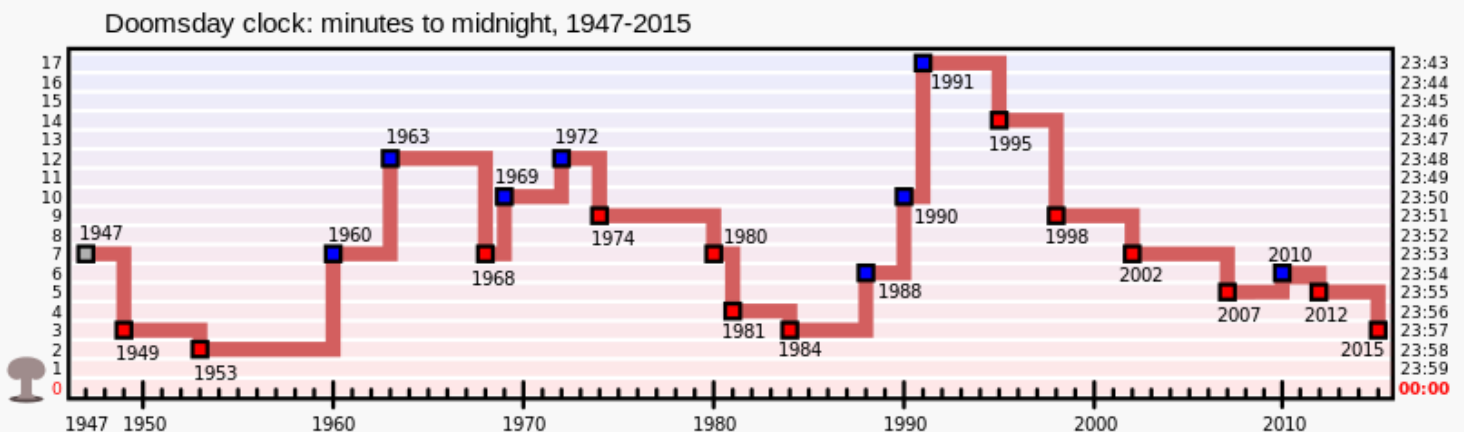
Six UN Peacekeepers were wounded in Mali

■ Northern Mali has become a war zone since 2012, when France intervened in the country to fight al-Qaeda's presence. Notwithstanding the deployment of the regular troops and the UN peacekeepers, employed in the so-called MINUSMA mission, there are continuous attacks. In the last one, that took place on the fourth of January, on the road between Asongo and Menaka, in the Gao region, six UN soldiers were wounded by a bomb. They had to leave the city of Gao for appropriate medical treatment. Conversely, in the same day, the mayor of Gao died, because of the wounds reported in an ambush that killed his son.

The “doomsday clock” moved two minutes closer to midnight since 2012

■ For the second time in a row the symbolic doomsday clock moved closer to midnight because of the global climate change. It moved from six to five minutes three years ago and according to the clock humanity is now only three minutes away from apocalypse. The last time the situation was this advanced was during the cold war in 1984 when communication between the United States and the Soviet Union was entirely discontinued. The recent move of the clock happened after the warning of scientists about the seriousness of climate change stating that “2014 was the hottest year in 130 years of systematic keeping”. Scientists are blaming the leaders for not being earnest about the present-day situation and they do not take the necessary steps against it.

“Humanity is now only
three minutes away from apocalypse”



Doomsday Clock. Graph: Wikimedia Commons





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