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and contemporary global issues”*

# Cultural Relations Policy News & Background



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## About CRP News & Background

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## Content

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- 1** How Davos brings the global elite together
- 2** Final days of the EU's refugee strategy
- 3** Power sharing collapses in Northern Ireland
- 4** Theresa May rejects European single market
- 6** Pope Francis takes de facto control
- 8** Kosovo stops Serbian train crossing border
- 9** Russia begins to withdraw its forces from Syria
- 11** Iraqi Army is getting ready to take western side of Mosul
- 12** Morocco re-joins the African Union
- 13** Obama administration ends special immigration policy
- 14** Donald J. Trump sworn in as 45th president of the USA
- 16** Trump's first foreign actions
- 18** Trump signs refugee ban
- 21** News in brief

## How Davos brings the global elite together

**Edina Paleviq** ■

■ Heads of state, business leaders, prominent academics, philanthropists and a retinue of journalists, celebrities and hangers-on descended on 17 January on Davos, Switzerland, for the World Economic Forum.

Davos is a resort town high in the Swiss Alps. Each January, the global elite meet for two weeks, for a series of meetings and discussions about “entrepreneurship in the global public interest”. This could be described as world’s most expensive networking event. Beyond the events on the conference’s official calendar are an even more exclusive series of parties, dinners and outings.

This Forum was founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab, a German economics professor, with the aim to catch up the American management processes. Two years later, the conference had shifted its focus to global economic and social issues, and the first political leaders were invited to attend. The organisation was renamed the World Economic Forum in 1987 and since then it has been the site of several historic meetings, including the first ministerial-level meeting between North and South Korea and another between the leaders of East and West Germany. Later on, the conference grew and more politicians, leaders and celebrities began attending the event.

This year more than 2,500 people are expected to attend the conference. Present will be Theresa May, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, and Xi Jinping, president of China. They are attending the conference for the first time this year and President Xi is the first Chinese head of state to attend the event. Expected attendees include also the singer Shakira, the actor Forest Whitaker, Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer at Facebook, the actor and activist Matt Damon, the Formula One driver Nico Rosberg and Jack Ma, the Chinese billionaire and founder of Alibaba. Though gender equality is often discussed at the forum, just 17 percent of last year’s participants were women, according to the forum.



*US Secretary of State John Kerry speaks with New York Times columnist Tom Friedman before the two have a conversation on January 17, 2017, at the World Economic Forum in Davos.  
Photo: U.S. Department of State [Wikimedia Commons]*



## Final days of the EU's refugee strategy

**Violetta Vaski** ■

■ As the European Union's refugee strategy is heading to an end, it is time to look back and evaluate the attempts of last year. As we can see from the statistics of the European Commission, only 8,162 refugees were relocated (state of play as of 6 December 2016) from Italy and Greece to other member states, out of the desired number of 160,000. Even if we consider that this plan was announced in September 2015 and seek to encompass two years the numbers of successfully relocated refugees show extremely low effectivity. Although the European Union provides financial support with the EU budget, it could not deal with such rejection of the plan coming from Poland and Hungary. Slovakia and the Czech Republic have received less than 15 refugees each. Aiming to change this attitude, in May the European Union has decided to make countries rejecting refugees pay a so called "solidarity contribution" amounting up to 250,000 euros for every person they should take. The aspiration reached refusal from the V4 countries, regarding it as a form of blackmail. In May 2015 the Commission introduced a European Resettlement Scheme, which was adopted by July, it was designed to provide a safe path for refugees entering the EU. Supported by the EU budget too, its aim was to

resettle 22.000 in need for international protection to member countries. As the Commission's information shows 13,887 have been resettled. Although, the EU has met only 5% of its goals, Dimitris Avramopoulos, the European Commissioner in charge of migration, claimed it was possible to hit the target by September 2017. Other EU officials, such as European Council President Donald Tusk and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker are certainly not this hopeful, as they cannot emphasise enough the importance of getting migration into control. However during the last year, they seemed to differ on several points in concerning migration. They have been rarely seen on the same side, as while Juncker aimed to pressure EU countries to receive refugees, Tusk was trying to achieve better protection on borders. They even warn that unless the EU can finally achieve migration goals, the Schengen zone would fail. After last years failed tries to reach compliance in a common migration policy, and to make countries implement their promised measures, European officials are now seeking for an alternative. Juncker pointed out the necessity of a solution until the end of February, as the March European Council would be the last time to see if the strategy works.



## Power sharing collapses in Northern Ireland

**Debóra Kovács** ■

■ After a belligerent row over the green energy scandal “cash for ash”, the power-sharing in Northern Ireland collapsed, as it was expected by experts. Since Sinn Féin refused to nominate a new deputy first minister in the Stormont parliament after the party’s Martin McGuinness resigned as Deputy First Minister, the government can no longer continue to govern, according to the complex rules of power-sharing.

In response James Brokenshire, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, announced fresh elections which will be held on the 2nd of March. It is not certain yet whether Martin McGuinness will stand as a candidate in the upcoming election, although Sinn Féin is keen for his name to be the party’s slate.

The main parties have already started electioneering even before the campaign’s official start. Sinn Féin, the strongest political party since 2005, revealed its slogan for the contest while the Democratic Unionist Party’s leader Northern Ireland First Minister Arlene Foster attended a party rally on Saturday night on the 11th of January.

Foster denies the allegations that she asked civil servants to change documents just to reduce her appearance in the scheme.

Northern Ireland as the only part of the UK which shares a land border with another EU country, the Republic of Ireland had its concerns about how this border could be affected by Brexit and now the power-sharing collapse.



*Northern Ireland Parliament Buildings.*  
Photo: Lofty [Wikimedia Commons]



## Theresa May rejects European single market

Violetta Vaski ■

■ On 26 January 26, the Brexit Bill entitled the European Union Act 2017 (Notification of Withdrawal), has been published in London, requesting the MPs of the Parliament to add their consent to trigger Article 50. Regarding the previous decision of the Supreme Court, British Government cannot deliver Brexit without the acceptance of the Parliament. First, it has to go through the MPs in The House of Commons,

five days. According to Davis Davis, the Brexit Secretary, the bill can be legitimised quickly, as he hopes that the Parliament respects the vote of British people. However such a hope would not be easy to fulfil, as the Labour Party has already attached seven attachments to the Bill, in which the most important ones are to have a say in the final deal, access to the single market, protect the rights of workers, and to keep all



followed by the House of Lords. If the Bill is unanimously accepted, it gives Prime Minister Theresa May the authority to trigger Article 50 and start the negotiating process of leaving the European Union. As the government is concerned about the possible delay of the negotiation's starting date, they specified the amount of time MPs can spend with debating in

existing EU tax avoidance. The SNP aims to submit more numerous amendments to the Bill, however, due to its short extent these appeals are not likely to be accomplished. Making the legislation as short as possible limits the attempts to add many amendments as they have to be directly connected to the 137 written down in the Bill.





*Theresa May. Photo: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor [Elicke]*

As a concrete strategy is pressured from several MPs, Prime Minister Theresa May has announced the publication of a White Paper in the near future, in order to make Britain's strategy towards negotiations clear. On the 17th of January, in her much-participated speech about the withdrawal from the European Union, she has already stated concretely, that the United Kingdom will completely leave the Single Market, as any other solution would result in not leaving the European Union at all. She insisted to follow the route of the freest possible trade, rejecting the warnings by Guy Verhofstadt, regarding that there would be no cherry picking allowed for the UK. Prime Minister Theresa May has also expressed the priorities of the country in the leaving process, including the maintenance of the common travel area between the UK and Irish Republic, tariff-free

trade with EU and a customs agreement, continued sharing of intelligence and control of migration rights for EU citizens for the UK and inversely as well.

Meanwhile, the UK is preparing itself for the possibility of the full cessation to the Single Market, by developing new economic relations towards New Zealand, India and Australia. Discussions have already started regarding future trade deals, filling the gaps left by the remaining EU members.

### Why European Parliament's presidential elections matter for Brexit

As the European Parliament plays an essential role in the future of Brexit negotiations, it is crucial who will be its leader. Currently, there are eight MPs aiming to achieve the presidency. Amongst the four Italians, two Belgians, one Romanian and the Briton, there are three receiving the most favourable support. Antonio Tajani, an Italian air force officer represents EPP (European People's Party), the biggest formulation. Gianni Pittella, also Italian, is the leader of the second largest party in the Parliament, the S&D (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats). His main goal is to strengthen the authority of the Parliament. The third most favored candidate was the former Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, but he has been already withdrawn after 11 hours. The forthcoming president, elected in every two and a half years, will determine EU policy, including the attitude towards the demands of the UK.

“British Government cannot deliver Brexit without the acceptance of the Parliament”





## Pope Francis takes de facto control of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

Edina Paleviq ■

■ The Knights of Malta Prince and Grand Master position was supposed to be a job for life. At least that is what Matthew Festing, the 67-year-old Briton who has held the role for the last nine years, thought until Pope Francis sacked him this week after a very public battle of wills, and won't, over condoms. The scandal started last

month when Festing fired the order's Grand Chancellor Albrecht Freiherr von Boeselager. It seems Boeselager concealed the fact that one of the two Catholic missions offering medical assistance to sex slaves in Myanmar, which he oversaw on behalf of the Knights of Malta, doled out condoms as a part of its medical services.

In 2014, about 220,000 people in Myanmar were HIV-infected and about 11,000 died from related illnesses, according to UNAIDS. Free condom distribution is a must for the fight against HIV/AIDS among all sex workers and even more vulnerable are sex slaves. But the members of the Knights of Malta, while they are not full clerics, do take the usual strict vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience to the Catholic Church, which prohibits the use of birth control for any reason, even to stop the spread of a fatal epidemic.

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, known as "the Sovereign Military Order of Malta" or the "Knights of Malta" for short, is one of the Catholic Church's oldest and most respected institutions. Founded in Jerusalem in the 11th century, the lay religious order began as a monastic community that ministered to and later protected pilgrims in the Holy Land, and continues charitable works throughout the



HMEH Fra' Matthew Festing, 79th Prince and Grand Master, Sovereign Military Order of Malta.  
Photo: Aquilachrysaetos [Wikimedia Commons]



world today. It is under the Vatican structure with 13,500 members, 25,000 employees and 80,000 volunteers, who are compelled to follow the rules, set forth by the Holy See.

Boeselager had been hiding the trail of the condom handouts. After this was discovered, two missions were shut down and a third was left open to avoid creating a vacuum in medical services, and he was asked by Festing to resign, which he refused to do.

The Knights' press statement reads: "After Boeselager refused this, eventually the Grand Master [Festing] had no choice but to order him, under the Promise of Obedience, in presence of the Grand Commander and the Cardinal Patronus, to resign. Boeselager refused again. Thus, the Grand Commander, with the backing of the Grand Master and the Sovereign Council and most members of the Order around the world, initiated a disciplinary procedure after which a member can be suspended from membership in the Order, and thus all Offices within the Order".

Boeslager then went to the pope himself to complaining and Francis apparently agreed. He appointed a five-member commission to investigate the Knights of Malta matter, specifically the circumstances of the firing, and the pope's decision was met with an astonishing rebuke.

In the statement the Grand Magistry of the Sovereign Council of the Knights of Malta said: "The Grand Magistry of the Sovereign Order of

Malta has learnt of the decision made by the Holy See to appoint a group of five persons to shed light on the replacement of the former Grand Chancellor. The replacement of the former Grand Chancellor is an act of internal governmental administration of the Sovereign Order of Malta and consequently falls solely within its competence. The aforementioned appointment is the result of a misunderstanding by the Secretariat of State of the Holy See. The Grand Master respectfully clarified the situation in a letter to the Supreme Pontiff, laying out the reasons why the suggestions made by the Secretariat of State were unacceptable". Shortly afterward, the Vatican issued its own statement of clarification and it said: "For the support and advancement of this generous mission, the Holy See reaffirms its confidence in the five Members of the Group appointed by Pope Francis on 21 December 2016 to inform him about the present crisis of the Central Direction of the Order, and rejects, based on the documentation in its possession, any attempt to discredit these Members of the Group and their work. The Holy See counts on the complete cooperation of all in this sensitive stage, and awaits the Report of the above-mentioned Group in order to adopt, within its area of competence, the most fitting decisions for the good of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and of the Church."

The Vatican will now assign an interim leader until the Knights of Malta hold their own election for Festing's replacement.



## Kosovo stops Serbian train crossing border in move declared “act of war”

Edina Paleviq ■

■ Deep-lying tensions between Kosovo and Serbia have erupted in a furious row after a Serbian train, emblazoned with patriotic graffiti. The train was decorated with large images of Serbian orthodox religious icons from famous monasteries in Kosovo, in the inside, and the slogan “Kosovo is Serbia” in 20 languages painted on the train. This was not just any rail journey. It would have been the first direct train in almost two decades between Serbia’s capital Belgrade and North Mitrovica, a town in northern Kosovo with a large ethnic-Serb population. However, the train was blocked from crossing the border by Kosovo’s border police.

Marko Djuric, who heads the Serbian government's office for Kosovo, said “This is like a mobile exhibition presenting our cultural heritage.” Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic ordered that day the train to stop in Raska on the Serbian side of the border, saying Kosovar Special Forces were trying to blow up the track. He accused Kosovo of overreacting, telling a press conference he decided to stop the train to show that Serbia want peace. He also added: “We sent a train, not a tank.”

Serbia also claimed that Kosovo was planning to arrest the driver if the train crossed the border, but Kosovo has denied the accusations. However, Kosovo saw the train as an act of provocation. Kosovo Prime Minister Isa Mustafa contacted the US and the European Union to express his country’s concerns. He said: “I believe that turning back the train was the appropriate action and its entry into the independent and sovereign Republic of Kosovo would not be allowed.” Also the Kosovan government minister responsible for dialogue with Serbia, Edita Tahiri, said: “Serbia has a dangerous plan that should worry us all – both Kosovo and international partners. This is a provocation towards Kosovo, which shows that Serbia has openly shown its aggressive policy, which endangers the sovereignty and territorial integrity and national security” of Kosovo.

Due to some sources, the painting and decoration of the train was made by Russia and neither Serbia nor Russia recognise Kosovo’s independence, which was declared nine years after a war between separatists and the government in Belgrade.



## Russia begins to withdraw its forces from Syria

**Violetta Vaski** ■

■ The Syrian conflict is labelled as the deadliest conflict of the 21st century so far. We can estimate 450,000 Syrians killed during fighting, at least one million injured and more than 12 million had to leave their homes. The conflict has begun 5 years ago, when civil rebel ousted the Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, continuing in similar actions taken in Arab countries against governmental forces, resulting in the so called “Arab Spring”. In Syria, protest erupted following the inhumane torture of young boys who were supporting the initiative



*Demonstration in Damascus in 2011.  
Photo: shamsnn [Wikimedia Commons]*

with graffiti. We can count numerous civil protests in Syria after, but most of them were bloodily stroke down. The Syrian government, led by President Bashar al-Assad responded in an extremely unacceptable way, killing many civils by firing into the crowd during the protests and even imprisoning people of the oppositional political party.

The violent actions took against demonstrators by the government met a large-scale international rejection resulting in interference implemented by the UN, EU, USA. However, there are several countries supporting Syrian government due to religious (Lebanon, Iran, etc.) or economical values (Russia). The support of Russia have been already developed during the cold war, even a Russian naval port at Tartus represents this political and economic alliance. Russia has an interest in maintaining the Assad regime, both because in case of the failure of the regime, all Russian investment and agreements would be nullified, and on the other hand, the military base in Tartus has a key geostrategic value, as it is the only naval port



under the control of Russia outside the borders of the former Soviet Union.



*Meeting on Russia's Armed Forces actions in Syria in 2015.  
Photo: President of Russia [kremlin.ru]*

During the years of the conflict, Russia has supported the government by sending military trainers and weapons, and officially it has entered the conflict in 2015, even inducing air strikes. Moreover, the country has helped the Assad regime by vetoing all proposals submitted to the Security Council of the United Nations (China doing the same). Recently, due to a ceasefire act between the government and the opposition groups on the 30th of December 2016, Russia reduced its military deployment. In January, 2017 forces started to be withdrawn, starting with the aircraft carrier group, which

has carried out air strikes against anti-government forces.

Several opinions share the view that Aleppo's fall resulted in greater power of the government, hence Russia is not needed to maintain such participation of military deployment. Others believe, that this act does not mean that Russian powers operating in the area would weaken, as in last March the same statement was announced, and just some warplanes were out. During the month, peace talks will be carried out by Iran, Turkey and Russia in Kazakhstan, maybe opening a new chapter in the situation.



*Aleppo, December 2016.  
Photo: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation [Wikimedia Commons]*

“Russia has an interest in maintaining the Assad regime”



## Iraqi Army is getting ready to take western side of Mosul

**Deniz Horuz** ■

■ The Iraqi Army explained that the eastern part of Mosul has been taken from ISIS and on 18 January its spokesman announced that the army was preparing to take the city's west. Talib Shagati, a counterterrorism official, told reporters that they had captured the east side of the Tigris River dividing the city into two.



*Fake ISIS tank. South of Mosul.  
Photo: Mstyslav Chernov [Wikimedia Commons]*

Government forces succeeded in moving rapidly toward the eastern parts of Mosul in the new wave of attacks that they launched last month. For the capture of Mosul, the operation was launched two years later last October, when the city was taken by ISIS, which captured the vast sections of North and West Iraq. The Peshmerga forces, Sunni tribal forces and Shia militias are participating in the biggest military operation in Iraq in recent years. US-led coalition-led

warplanes and military advisers are also on the line in the operations.

The Mosul operation slowed down primarily in the face of the intense resistance of the ISIS. However, the government's forces have made rapid progress in recent attacks on East Mosul. The Iraqi Army launched an operation to seize the campus of Mosul University, which was used by ISIS militants as headquarters and chemical weapons production facility according to Iraqi officials. West Mosul, where the old city is filled with narrow streets, is still under the control of ISIS. Until now, 100,000 people living in Mosul and its vicinity have had to leave their homes and it has been warned that UN officials will increase this number as pro-government forces suppress the city.



*Iraq IDP refugees in Mosul. Photo: Mstyslav Chernov [Wikimedia Commons]*



## Morocco re-joins the African Union

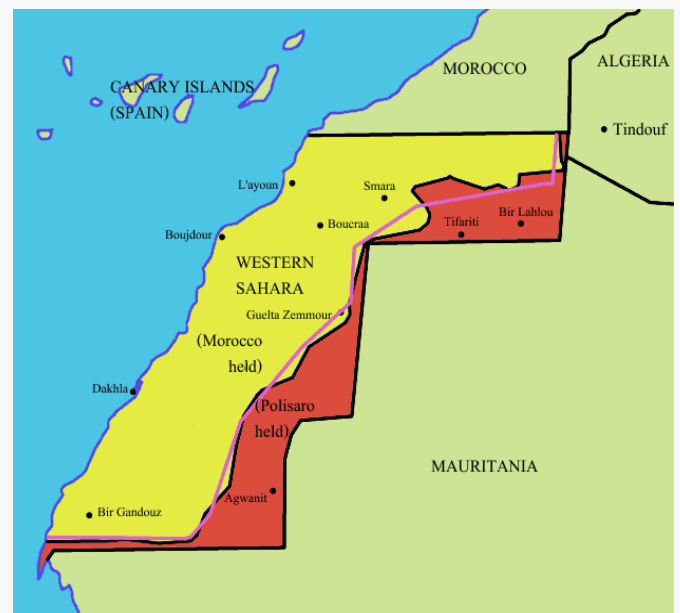
Debóra Kovács ■

■ After 33-years of absence Morocco has decided and was allowed by the African Union to re-join with the continental body. Morocco submitted its bid to re-join last year hoping that the AU would help with diplomatic gains against the issue of Western Sahara's independence movement. Later on Lamine Baali, ambassador of Western Sahara to Ethiopia and the AU said that Morocco re-admitted the fact that Western Sahara will remain a member of the AU.

According to observers the “new” membership of Morocco was supported by many members of the AU, but also had its opposition from countries that have been supporting Polisario. Other source of the African Union confirmed that 39 countries were supporting of the idea to welcome Morocco back in the AU but 9 voted against it.

The question of the controversial territory of Western Sahara was discussed after the African Union took Morocco back as the 55th member of the continental body.

After Morocco's debate and its acceptance, Polisario leader and member of the Sahrawi delegation Minister Mohamed Beiset despite of



Map shows Moroccan (yellow) and Polisario (red) control of Western Sahara.  
Photo: Omar-Toons [Wikimedia Commons]

the lengthy debate “the wisdom of the African leaders” made it possible to find a consensus that was acceptable to everyone. In the delegation's opinion it is better to have Morocco inside the house so this way they can try to reach African solutions to African problems.

Later Beiset congratulated Morocco for joining the AU, and said that this is going to be a solution the long-standing conflict that has separated them.



## Obama administration ends special immigration policy for Cubans

Deniz Horuz ■

■ On 13 January US President Barack Obama announced that his presidential decree – issued a few days before his mandate expired – ended the “politics that allowed Cuban immigrants to enter the country without a visa”. The written statement from the White House stated that this policy, which began with implementation on those conditions 20 years ago, was removed as part of the “normalisation process” between the two countries. The Cuban immigrants will be treated like immigrants from other countries and the border regulations between the two countries will be clearer. Immediately after the White House statement, the Cuban government said, “We find the step taken as positive.” Cuban immigrants will be subjected to the same treatment as immigrants from other countries and it will end of the policy which allowed illegal immigrants who entered the United States to be granted with exceptional residence which is also referred as the “wet foot-dry foot” policy. In this case, the Cubans who come to the country with a visa can enter the United States, those who do not have visas will be returned to Cuba after the necessary procedures.

With the influx of hundreds of thousands of Cubans from the 1960s to the Florida state, migrants were treated with special status, and in 1996, US President Bill Clinton passed the “wet foot-dry foot” policy to avoid dangerous sea voyages. With this policy immigrants who managed to reach the US soil (dry foot) were allowed to sit, while migrants caught in the sea (wet foot) were being sent back.





## Donald J. Trump sworn in as 45th president of the United States of America

Edina Paleviq ■



*President Donald Trump being sworn in on January 20, 2017.  
Photo: White House photographer [Wikimedia Commons]*

■ Donald J. Trump is sworn in as the 45th president of the United States on 20 January 2017. In a ceremony that capped a remarkable power, Trump presented himself as the leader of a populist uprising to restore lost greatness. During his inaugural address he painted a bleak picture of life for some in the United States, promising to end what he called the “American carnage”. “I will fight for you with every breath in my body, and I will never, ever let you down,” Trump said in his speech in front of hundreds of his admirers. “America will start winning again, winning like never before. We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams.”

During his campaign, he constantly told rally-goers about what he described as the horrors of the inner cities, the tragedy of the education system and the extent to which the United States was being taken advantage of around the globe, offering his leadership as an alternative. “Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities, rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation. An education system flush with cash but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge. [...] And the crime and the gangs and the drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealised potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now”, he told the crowd. And as he promised on his presidential campaign, he said “From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this day forward, it’s going to be only America first. America first. Every decision – on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs – will be made to benefit American workers and American families. [...] Together we will make America strong again. We will make America wealthy again. We will make America proud



again. We will make America safe again. And, yes, together, we will make America great again.”

Straight after the inauguration, Trump started right away with signing several documents and rolling back the policies of his predecessor, former President Barack Obama, by issuing orders freezing new regulations from recent weeks and ordering agencies to “ease the burden” of the Affordable Care Act during the transition from repealing to replacing the law.

Throughout the day, there were mostly peaceful protests, against the new president. Sporadic violence broke out as hundreds of demonstrators smashed shop windows and burned a limousine, while police officers in riot helmets responded with tear gas. This happened a few blocks from the White House. More than 200 people were arrested that day and six officers were injured in scuffles with protesters. Protest groups all around the city chanted anti-Trump slogans and carried signs with slogans including “Trump is not president” and “Make Racists Afraid Again.”

On the following day, on the first full day of the Trump administration, a historic Women’s March was organised in Washington, where over one million people marched in sign of protest. Women activists, galvanised by Trump campaign rhetoric and behaviour they found to be especially misogynistic, spearheaded scores of US marches and sympathy rallies around the world that organisers said drew nearly 5 million protesters in all. Women-led protests against



*President Trump signing his first official orders as President, including nominating his Cabinet.  
Photo: Executive Office of the President of the United States [\[Wikimedia Commons\]](#)*

Trump, who has vowed that US policy would be based on the principle of “America first,” also were staged in Sydney, London, Tokyo and other cities across Europe and Asia.

At the moment the presidency was transferred to Donald Trump from Barack Obama, a digital transfer of power also took place online: the White House website was dramatically reorganised on the inauguration day, to emphasise the incoming administration’s priorities.

Other than Obama’s White House website, which among others housed information on civil rights, climate change, LGBT rights, healthcare, immigration, education and the “Iran Deal”, Trump’s White House website, lists just six “issues”. “America first energy plan” has replaced climate change as a priority, while “Bringing back jobs and growth” focuses on lowering taxes. Civil rights has been replaced with “Standing up with our law enforcement community” and emphasises the “lawlessness” of illegal immigration and inner cities.



## Trump's first foreign actions - Balkan war drums beat again

Edina Paleviq ■

■ Since 1990s, the United States is trying to keep peace in the Balkans. After Yugoslavia collapsed in 1991, leaving violence and turmoil in its wake, it fell to NATO, led by the United States, to sort out all the mess. Now a generation later, with Trump's plans for a new foreign policy, war may return to Europe's unstable southeast.

After World War I Yugoslavia was an artificial creation of the Versailles Treaty and it survived after World War II due to the repression of Communist dictator Josip Broz Tito and fear of invasion by the Soviet Union. After Tito died in 1980, Slobodan Milosevic came to power by playing the Serbian nationalist card. Other ethnic groups responded by establishing their own nations. The Balkans erupted.

The first Bush administration originally supported Yugoslavia's territorial integrity, but Germany recognised Slovenia's secession, spurring Yugoslavia's serial break-up. The US and Europeans supported creation of Croatia, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a much complicated problem, as the country is divided among Muslims, ethnic Serbs, and ethnic Croats. In 1995, the jury-rigged arrangement hashed out by President Bill Clinton in Dayton, Ohio, to keep



Image: Peter Fitzgerald [Wikimedia Commons]

Bosnia together after that country's terrible civil war, was meant to be a short-term solution. Yet Bosnia is still stuck with the Dayton system. Now it has the weak state in Sarajevo, and much power devolved to two pseudo-state entities: the mostly Muslim Federation (with a dwindling Croatian minority) and the Serbian Republic (Republika Srpska). Despite more than two decades of Western political and military intervention and billions of aid dollars spent to make Bosnia less inclined to fratricide, not much political progress has been achieved.

The Kosovo situation was even worse. The Serbian province gained independence after a 78-day NATO bombing campaign in 1999 in Serbia. Now, although most of the world



recognises Kosovo's independence, Serbia and Russia do not. However, Belgrade's constant provocations raise tensions. Recently, Belgrade dispatched a train adorned with the slogan "Kosovo is Serbia" in 21 languages to Mitrovica, which apparently was manufactured in Russia. The train fortunately was sent back before it entered Kosovo. Serbia's president, a strong nationalist, has threatened to send his country's military into Kosovo if harm comes to Serbs there, which would restart the ugly interethnic war that NATO tamped down with bombs in 1999.



*KFOR soldiers from the US Army in Mitrovica.  
PhotoDoD photo by Sgt. Brendan Stephens, US Army [Wikimedia Commons]*

Russian inroads into Serbia itself are worrisome. The presence of Russia's intelligence services in Serbia is unusually large and conspicuous, and they have recently established a spy base in the country's south whose obvious purpose is monitoring Western activities in the region. Two months ago, Russia, Belarus and Serbia conducted joint military exercises on Serbian territory, termed "Slavic Brotherhood," in a show of anti-NATO force. Most important, Moscow recently gifted Belgrade modern

weaponry, including 60 armoured vehicles and six MiG-29 jet fighters. This can be a game-changer in the region. The arrival of the Russian aircraft, expected this spring, will make Serbia the only ex-Yugoslav country to possess modern jet fighters. Croatia, a NATO member, has a dozen dilapidated MiG-21s, which are generations older than the MiG-29, and thanks to years of neglect no more than a handful of them can get airborne. Without Atlantic Alliance aid to Zagreb, Serbia's new jets will dominate the region. What Putin wants in the Balkans seems plain enough, namely political chaos that will distract the West, which made itself the region's ward in the 1990s and if he asks Trump for a favour in support of Serbia, the West Balkans risks falling back into open conflict.

### Trump withdraws from Trans-Pacific Partnership

President Trump has fulfilled a campaign pledge by signing an executive order to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The 12-nation trade deal, signed in 2015, was a linchpin of former President Barack Obama's Asia policy. Its signatories are Australia, Vietnam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the US and Brunei. They together represent 40 percent of the world economy.

Trump's decision came as a surprise. During his election campaign he railed against international trade deals, blaming them for job losses and focusing anger in the industrial heartland, but Obama had argued that this deal would provide an effective counterweight to China in the region.

At the signing ceremony in the White House, Trump said: "We've been talking about this for a long time. It's a great thing for the American worker".

That day Trump also cut funding for international groups that provide abortions, and froze hiring of some federal workers.



## Trump signs refugee ban

Violetta Vaski ■



*US President Donald Trump.  
Photo: Michael Vadon [Elickr]*

■ After spending one week in office, President Donald Trump took actions in order to reshape America's security policy starting with immigration. Seemingly, his promises about implementing a more protective policy are turning into actions. On the 28th of January, he added his signature to an executive order banning nationals of seven Muslim-majority countries (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia) from entering the United States, lasting for 90 days. In the same executive order, he also suspended the US Refugee Admission Program for 120 days. Regarding precedence, Muslims were banned by President George Bush after the incident of 9/11, but this kind of specific designation of particular countries is

new to the history of the United States. The seven countries were labelled "countries of concern" during the Obama administration, which resulted in further measures in that period. People, who entered one of the previously mentioned states, had to apply for a visa if they wanted to visit the USA after 2011. Trump's restrictions are way more broader, as they refuse anybody coming from those seven states, and green card holders have to be rescreened under the procedure of in-person interviews. However, Trump administration refers to the fact that these countries were already chosen during the Obama's administration, one of their explanation is also that they expose a serious threat regarding terrorism. Giving the example of the recent California shooting (in which the attackers were not from the 7 countries) and 9/11, they missed the fact that the hijackers were actually from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon. Ethic lawyers say that there is a connection between Trump's business interests and the Muslim-majority countries missed out from the ban. Trump Organisation indeed does particular business with these countries, including two companies with dealings in Egypt



and eight in Saudi Arabia, furthermore, Trump Organisation is developing golf courses in Dubai as well.

The announcement of the order resulted in disapproval from all over the world, as it pulled back the though journey of the acceptance of human rights. Due to President Barack Obama's attempts to help people coming from war-torn countries, 10,000 Syrian refugees have been resettled last year. The refugee limit of 110,000 people settled by Barack Obama have almost halved as a sequel of the implementation of the executive order. Humanitarian efforts made by the previous president have been cut off by this. The vetting procedure established in the Obama period, namely the Visa Interview Waiver Program has also suffered from several consequences resulting in the unfavourable situation of refugees. The programme included in-person interviews, which enabled the government to collect personal information of those entering the United States, but this also meant that people who already made the process, are not obliged to repeat it. Cancelling the Visa Interview Waiver Program triggered by the executive order also belongs to influencing the practices of the Program, which means that people travelling back to the USA are no longer allowed to skip in-person interviews in order to renew their visa.

The executive order has prioritised Christians over Muslims, as the persecution involved religion-based separation of people applying for refugee status. The order states that if the religion owes a minority in the receiving country, it is not accepted in the same way as

for example, Christians. Abed A. Ayoub, the director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee explained Trump's measures as "They're based off Islamophobia, they're based off of xenophobia, and we cannot allow that to continue."

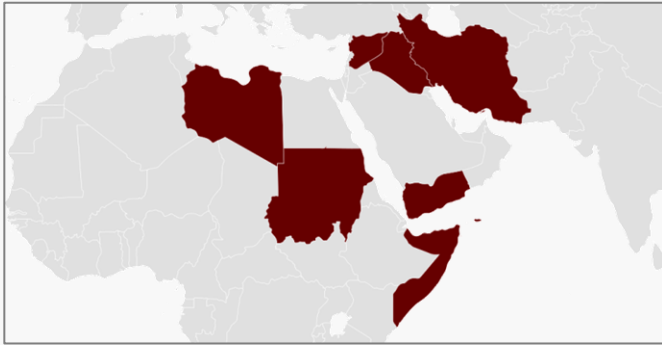


Donald Trump signing the "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States" order.  
Photo: Staff of the President of the United States [Wikimedia Commons]

Following the executive order, CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) proclaimed that they will make a federal lawsuit against the move, implying that the government should not favour people based on their religious background. Also, created during the Civil Rights Movement in 1965, a particular law was passed subsuming the refusal of discriminatory acts based on individual attributes: "no person shall receive any preference or priority or be discriminated against in the issuance of an immigrant visa because of the person's race, sex, nationality, place of birth, or place of residence." Experts suggest that there are several ways of challenging the order, for example, underpinning that it is discriminatory, which is forbidden in the law. US and



international law also includes the prohibition of deporting those, who will suffer torture after being sent home.



*Map of countries affected by Executive Order 13769. Collectively, the order applies to over 200 million people (approximate population of the seven countries) while about 90,000 people from these countries currently hold a US immigrant or non-immigrant visa.  
Image: JayCoop [Wikimedia Commons]*

As the order has resulted in confusion at the airports, several changes were made to the order later. One of them is that no one can be held in an airport and green card holders were given exemptions. However, they still have to go through several security checks following landing, but if they don't have a criminal background they will be allowed to return to the country.

### **US judge blocks deportations under Muslim ban**

After Trump's Muslim ban, dozens of people were trapped at US airports trying to enter the country. Less than 24 hours after signing the ban in Pentagon, at least 109 travellers had been

denied to enter the US, according to Homeland Security. Recent ruling by a federal judge has blocked some parts of the ban in order to avoid the sending back of people who landed with valid visas right after the announcement. As hundreds of people were trapped at airports, after filing a lawsuit against the ban, this was a victory for The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). As Lee Gelernt, member of the Union claimed, "This ruling preserves the status quo and ensures that people who have been granted permission to be in this country are not illegally removed off US soil".

### **Trump's travel ban does not apply for Canada**

Canada's Prime Minister Office announced that the travel ban does not apply to Canadians. Canadian dual citizens are allowed to freely travel to the US without any restrictions. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau declared that Canada is welcoming refugees still, without concerning their religion. Janet Dench executive director of the Canadian Council for Refugees, disapproved Trump's travel ban, due to that these measures are going straight against of the values previously declared by the US, which was a global leader in protecting refugees

“following the executive order, the Council on American-Islamic Relations proclaimed that they will make a federal lawsuit against the move”



## ■ News in Brief

### Domestic affairs affecting international relations

#### Austria moves to ban full face veil in public places

■ Austria's coalition government has agreed to ban full face veils in public areas such as courts, schools and other "public places" as part of a reform package. The proposal was announced on the 30th of January. It also contains that police officers, judges, magistrates and public prosecutors are not allowed to wear head scarves to appear religiously neutral to people. With this movement Christian Kern, Austrian Chancellor wants to avoid that 600,000 Muslims who live in Austria to feel that they are not part of their society. The 35-page programme's text also says that for those who are not ready to accept enlightenment values will have to leave the country and society.

#### Mogadishu attack kills 28

■ On the 25th of January, at least 28 people were killed in an attack in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. The attackers were members of al-Shabaab, crashing the gates of the Dayah hotel with a car packed with explosives. The hotel is near to the Parliament and popular with government officials, some members of the Parliament were even thought to be at the hotel at that appointment. Al-Shabaab seems to strengthen its forces by carrying out successful attacks. Their aim is to overturn the country's government supported by the western.

#### Car bombing attack in Mali

■ At least 77 people were killed in the northern city of Gao in Mali, during a car bombing attack placed at the Joint Operational Mechanism base on the 18th of January. At the morning, hundreds of government soldiers and former rebels from the CMA movement gathered at the place preparing to conduct mixed patrols under a UN peace deal signed in 2015, when the car bombing hit. The incident took place just days after the French President Francois Hollande visited the camp to strengthen the cooperation of UN, French and Malian army members operating in Mali.

#### Terrorist attack in Quebec mosque

■ At least 6 people were killed and 40 people were injured when armed men fired gunshots on them while praying in a mosque on the 30th of January in Quebec City. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau officially announced that the incident was a terrorist attack. The local press gave the number of the attackers and according to the information there were 3 attackers. Radio Canada reported that three armed attackers opened fire on the mosque, based on eye-witness accounts. A large number of ambulances were sent to the Quebec City Islamic Cultural Centre, where the attack took place, and eight injured patients were moved to the hospital.





## ■ News in Brief

### Bilateral and international relations

#### New shifts of Maltese Presidency

■ On the 1st of January, Malta took the presidency of the Council of the European Union, which will last until the 30th of June. The EU aims to offer the presidency to small countries which are dwarfed by France and Germany in decision making processes. The previous presidency, which was led by Slovakia, put national interests forward, without stressing the importance of the common problems, such as migration. As Malta was a crossing place for many Africans in order to reach Europe, we can be sure the migration and border control will be important agenda items. The biggest challenge of the period is expected to be the negotiations with Britain, in which, Malta would not like any cherry picking. Joseph Muscat, the Prime Minister of Malta is expected to cooperate tightly with Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker in such problems, as they share the same opinion and values regarding these issues.

#### Cyber-attack in the Czech Republic

■ Czech foreign minister, Lubomir Zaoralek, said that a cyber-attack was discovered this month, which also breached his own mailbox and those of his deputies, led to thousands of documents being compromised over a period of several

months. He suggested other parts of the Czech government might have been attacked without discovering it, and asked Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka to hold urgent discussions at the next cabinet meeting. It is suspected that the hackers are working for a foreign power, and the attack is similar to that on the Democratic National Committee in the US last year. The ministry said it had been a “long-term target” for hackers, with frequent attempts to obtain passwords, but this attack was unusual in having succeeded.

#### American protection of Ukraine slacks

■ The situation in Ukraine starting by the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 could rise further. The USA was clearly supporting the Ukrainian government to help in the fight against pro-Russia separatists, but Washington is thinking differently right now. Donald Trump may withdraw his support, seeking a deal with Putin. During his campaign, Trump said that the „people of Crimea, from what I have heard, would rather be with Russia than where they were”. This announcement can lead to serious consequences, as Russia could have way more power over Ukraine without protection of the USA, allowing even to gain control over the country.



### **Greece will not extradite 8 Turkish military officers**

On the 26th of January, Greece's Supreme Court decided not to extradite eight fugitive troops who fled Turkey after a coup last July. The coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and was suppressed by the government and thousands of people were jailed after. European and Greek law forbid the extradition if there is a chance of not treating fairly in the home country or if their lives would be in danger. The final decision cannot be appealed. Right after the announcement, several protests broke out demanding the men to be returned and face jurisdiction, and President Erdogan released a statement disapproving the judgment.

### **Rosatom and AEOI signs roadmap for nuclear cooperation**

■ On the 19th of January the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI) and Russian ROSATOM signed a roadmap for cooperation regarding nuclear energy. The agreement was signed following a negotiation process, emphasising the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It also contains the contract of the reconstruction of two gas centrifuges in the Fordo facility. The facility will also give place to a nuclear, physics and technology centre according to the deal. The deal is in balance with the 2015 international deal of Iran and six world powers limiting Iran's nuclear program in exchange of removing the sanctions against the country.

### **US tanks in NATO drills in Poland**

Two shiploads of tanks, trucks and other military equipment arrived in Germany for "not just a training exercise" in the coast of Romania, in response to Russia's militarisation of Crimea. 4,000 US troops were moved in to position for the exercise in NATO states near Russia. US and Polish forces both participated in large "massing" drill in Poland at the end of January. Major General Timothy McGuire said that preparation is the key to the best way to maintain peace, and this exercise is just to show strength and cohesion of the alliance and the US commitment. According to an article on Breitbart the term "allied" was used in the report because the drill is not officially a NATO exercise, it just conducted by some of the NATO member countries as well.

### **Israel withholds UN contribution**

■ Israel announced it will withhold 6 million dollars from its annual contribution to United Nations. This is a response to a UN resolution arranging Israeli settlements built on land disputed with the Palestinians. Danny Danon, Israel's UN Ambassador claimed that this 6 million is the amount which the UN spends on support of Palestine. He also stated that "It is unreasonable for Israel to fund bodies that operate against us at the UN".





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