

*„Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues“*

# Cultural Relations Policy

## News and Background

# April 2013





## About CRP News & Background

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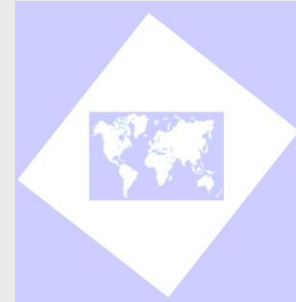
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## Hunger strike escalates at Guantanamo Bay

**By April** at least half of the men held at the Guantanamo detention camp out of the current 166 detainees have joined hunger strike, which started early as in February. Nevertheless, lawyers for the prisoners claimed that the military seriously underestimated the situation and the number of strikers has increased up to 100-130. Furthermore, according to a report of Washington Post, in numerous cases strikers are carried away unlawfully to Camp 5, where "detainees with strict treatment" are held. Washington is deeply concerned about finding an agreeable solution as pressure exerted on the Prime Minister and the Congress has increased in the last few weeks

The Guantanamo Bay detention camp has been surrounded by scandals ever since it was established in January 2002 by the Bush administration. It was a reactionary step to the dreadful attacks of 9/11 under the notion of "war against terror". Originally, "enemy combatants" from the Afghan War were imprisoned in the institution. However, later on those were also jailed there who were considered "dangerous to American security" without a fair trial or a proper verdict. Does it provide a sufficient explanation to the recent boom in the number of strikers?

Hunger strike is not an unknown phenomenon in Guantanamo, since the earliest recorded strike began in 2002 right



*Guantanamo captives in January 2002*

after the institution was established. The recent crisis is unique in a sense that it became the most widespread protest in the camp.

Official reports indicate unfair trials and unlawful detentions as the main triggering factors of the growing dissatisfaction among detainees. Although, it is also believed that the strike broke out after guards confiscated photos and other belongings after a cell search. However, the immediate catalyst for the protest must have been something more vigorous since a spectacular duplication in the number of strikers could be observed in late March and April. It is also believed that besides personal belongings copies of the Qur'an were also seized from the possession of inmates. Yet, Guantanamo officials fiercely reject such claims.

Due to the ambiguous causes of the protest movement even more attention is

paid to the detention camp on an international scale. On 5 April UN human



Guantanamo Bay

rights chief on US issues called the President to shut down the camp since incarceration without proper trial or charge is against the international standards of law.

Also, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is constantly monitoring the state of health of inmates. The organisation is committed to exclude the possibility of forced feeding as a treatment – said ICRC spokesman Alexis Heeb. The ICRC wants to respect the fate and decision of prisoners. In spite of their concern, 11 prisoners have been force fed so far in Guantanamo, which raises serious human right issues again.

### **Obama should keep his promise**

The strikes galvanized critiques of Obama, who are devoted to remind the president of his former promises concerning the closure of the camp.

Obama once already has considered the shutdown of the institution, which was even a part of his 2008 presidential campaign. Accordingly, he ordered the final closure of the camp within a year in 2009. Despite his attempts the Congress has passed such laws which restricted largely the prospects of the President.

Though, Obama at the end of the month confirmed again his real intentions. “It is critical for us to understand: Guantanamo is not necessary to keep America safe. It is expensive, inefficient, it hurts us in terms international standing and it lessens co-operation with our allies on counter-terrorism efforts” – claimed the President in a video of BBC news.

The Congress has to be fully convinced that the home country of detainees is stabilised or another foreign county can provide them a safe restart. Unless it happens, Obama's attempts will be blocked again. The President may need to find an alternative solution if he does not want to let the situation culminate into a greater scandal as the number of hunger strikers is growing day by day. Though, it is highly doubtful if there was an alternative for Obama without the consent of the Congress.

## Serbia-Kosovo talks end without deal

**After a 12-hour negotiation** marathon between Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi mediated by EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton no agreement had been reached. The “very narrow, but deep” gap between the two prime ministers results from a long process of finding back to a peaceful contact, but according to Ashton the cleavage can be bridged.



Hashim Thaçi and Tony Blair with Declaration of Independence of Kosovo

However there exist competing interests concerning “broad autonomy” to Kosovar Serbs in the northern Kosovo region in exchange for the recognition of Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, both countries are pressed for time aspiring after the EU-membership during the term of Irish lead. The EU-integration is the great promise and the pressure agent of the EU for admission of future acts. As the great promise does not only contain the offer of economic

improvement but a million dollar accession funds. Hence the Serbian accession is closely tied to the demand for recognition so that the threat of Serbia continuing blocking Kosovo's active integration into international organizations should belong to the past now.

Hoping that this exchange directs to normalization of relations, the question stays if Serbia and its former region are playing a waiting game by asking for “additional time and additional consultation” or if there is a real interest in



achieving a stabilization and association agreement in the soon future. Actually most Serbs are in favour of a cooperation, only the ones living close to the border representing one third of the Serb minority living in Kosovo refuse the recognition of the government in Pristina.

In response to the announcement of the European plans, many Serbs started demonstrations showing scepticism, mistrust falling back into old behaviour patterns. Kosovo is recognized as the birth place of the Serbian Nation in the Middle Ages, for this reason it is a highly symbolic place for Serbs and often still recognized as traditional Serb territory. The opponents of a EU membership tend to pervert the

arguments for the actual accession of Serbia alleging that EU just wants to take advantage of “resources, money and territory”.

Other harassments to the development of bilateral agreements might be the influence of Russia on Serbia and the autonomy granted to the Serb minority leading to further separatism than rather to a deeper understanding. Even the blocking of NATO peacekeeping-missions during the last few years leaves doubts whether the population will be ready for a peaceful neighbourhood with Kosovo if the authorities will start to cooperate with each other.

“SERBIAN ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION IS CLOSELY TIED TO THE DEMAND FOR RECOGNITION OF KOSOVO”

## Kerry expresses peace process concerns on Turkey visit

**Turkish Prime Minister** Recep Tayyip Erdoğan planned visit to the Israeli blocked Gaza Strip will proceed as scheduled, however according to media sources the actual date is yet undermined. US Secretary of State John Kerry advised Erdoğan to delay the visit to the Middle Eastern region as it may hamper peace negotiations currently underway between Israel and Palestine. "As we know, no peace process is easy. It always takes courage and determination, the willingness to speak out to overcome years of mistrust and of bloodshed, and this moment is no different," Kerry stated in Istanbul. Kerry's request was heavily criticized by Turkish Deputy Prime Minister who openly referred to the US Secretary's statements as "objectionable, wrong and incorrect". Turkish government spokesman Bülent Arınç reiterated the position saying that "It is the government which decides when and where the prime minister or any other Turkish official can travel. We are in no position to seek permission or acceptance from anyone."

The Turkish Prime Minister who for years was expressing a desire to visit the Gaza district confirmed that the intended trip to the Palestine enclave was not cancelled,

merely postponed until May 16, 2013 following a scheduled official visit to Washington. His decision came soon after Israel apologized to Turkey for killing eight Turkish citizens during a raid on an aid flotilla. Removing the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip is one of the chief conditions that Turkey demands in order to normalize the relations with Israel.



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

The US are adamantly against Erdoğan's trip as they believe that it could result in the further deterioration of ties between Turkey and Israel and at the same time also serve as a stepping point for international recognition of the Gaza-ruling Hamas,



allowing them the upper-hand in the peace process to the detriment of President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party. Meanwhile, Professor Dr. Mehmet Akif Okur, a Middle East expert from the Ankara Strategy Institute is claiming that the US is trying to restore the Turkey-Israel alliance whereby they will mutually collaborate vis-à-vis on the crisis in the Middle East, further asserting that "One of the major reasons that the US is not happy for the visit to take place is a concern that it would counter the positive steps taken in mending Turkish-Israeli ties," said. On the other hand, some see Erdoğan's visit as a chance for Turkey to sway the Hamas to contribute to the peace process.

Israel and the US are pleading with Hamas to cease the violence and to acknowledge Israel otherwise they will not accept them as negotiators in the peace talks. In the meantime, Fatah has also stressed their disapproval for Erdoğan's trip saying that it will damage the volatile political stability between the Hamas and the Fatah. Secretary Kerry has also reportedly requested small concessions from both Israel and Palestine as a means of opening up avenues to further negotiations. Kerry initially met with President Abbas who declined to have new discussions over the past four years. A senior State Department official, on the premise of anonymity said that Abbas and Kerry discussed "how to create a positive climate for negotiations" and that Kerry asked for the "specifics to be kept in the room in order to keep moving forward."

### **Israel and Turkey open flotilla compensation talks**

In a bid to restore ties between Turkey and Israel, senior officials from the former allies met on April 22, 2013 in Ankara to discuss compensatory payments for the victims of an Israeli raid on a flotilla to the Gaza-strip, Turkey's chief condition for the restitution of relations between the nations. The meeting focused on two primary issues, namely the amount to be paid to the Turkish families who were killed in the Gaza-bound Mavi Marmara ship as well as Istanbul's termination of all legal actions against Israeli officers and soldiers following the incident. Talks between the two came precisely one month after the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu gave formal apologies for the tragedy of the raid on May 2010 which claimed the lives of eight Turks and a Turkish-American. Subsequent to the meeting, the two Prime Ministers agreed to reestablish relations between the two nations and to return the respective ambassadors to their previous posts. Turkey has however warned that normalization of relations between the two would only be possible upon compensation and Israel's termination of the restrictions against the Palestinians. The Israeli officials, including the former Director General of the Foreign Ministry Joseph Ciechanover, and National Security Adviser Yaakov Amidror were scheduled to meet with Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç and Turkey's Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry Feridun Sinirlioğlu in Ankara in mid-April to conclude the negotiations.

## Kerry calls for delay of Turkish Gaza visit

**The US Secretary of the State**, John Kerry has expressed his deep concerns about the visit of Turkish PM in the Gaza strip. The timing of the visit raises controversial issues both in America and Israel, since it is planned to be carried out before formal negotiations between Turkey and Israel about the "Gaza-flotilla-scandal" would end.

However, Kerry's urging call for a delay did not promote reconciliation between the two countries as he was highly criticised by Turkish officials because of his claims. "The Turkish government decides when and where the PM or any other Turkish official travels to. An experienced foreign minister would not have done this"- said Bülent Arınç, who serves as the government spokesman.

Nevertheless, the fears of Kerry are not unjustified as Israeli-Turkish relations have never been so hectic and tumultuous. Uniquely, Turkey was the first Muslim country, which recognized formally the existence of the Israeli state early in 1949. They signed several agreements of military and defence industry cooperation in 1996 and 1997. Furthermore, the two countries had also close economic ties too.

The bonds began to loosen after nine Turkish people had been killed in May 2010 by Israeli soldiers. They were travelling on a ship called Mavi Marmara, which was part of a flotilla trying to transport supplies and aid to Gaza. Despite the Israeli naval blockade the ship entered the waters, which was a triggering factor of the incident.

The Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has previously apologised Erdoğan because

of their fatal mistake, though official peace negotiations to restore fully democratic relations started only in late April.

In the meantime, Erdoğan announced that he was planning to visit Palestine including the Gaza strip in May for the purpose of monitoring Israeli actions in the region. Such a visit before the end of the peace negotiations between Turkey and Israel evoked deep fear among US officials and politicians. John Kerry urged the postponement of the Gaza visit not only owing to its presumed negative effects on the reconciliation process between Turkey and Israel, but also because of the possibility for Hamas to gain international recognition. In case the latter prediction came true, balance could be greatly harmed between Fatah and Hamas, the two rival groups in Palestine.

Of course, the US Secretary of the State is probably more concerned about the possibility of losing a strategic Muslim ally of Israel in the Middle-East. Furthermore, analysts believe that the visit bears an additional symbolic meaning according to which "recent normalization of ties with Israel will not end with the restoration of a Turkey-Israeli alliance in the region" – wrote Gözde Nur Donat in Today's Zaman.

However, it is highly questionable if the US Secretary of the State could enhance positive outcomes with his urging claim, since recent Turkish reactions are mostly belligerent. The US had better attempt to encourage the delay through negotiations in a less urging manner.

## Syria: two years of Civil War

**One month ago**, there was the two year anniversary of the outbreak of violence in Syria and it became the deadliest month with 6,000 casualties. Since the outbreak, it transformed into a civil war causing up to 100,000 undifferentiated deaths according to the United Nations, 4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 1.5 million refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries. The riots are rooted in the movement known as the Arab Spring which spread from Tunisia across the Arab world and transformed from demonstrations for freedom into protests against the establishment.

The Syrian aspiration toward abroad creates a spill-over effect of which Syrian president Assad, whose father already had ruled the country for over 30 years, warns that the conflict will even spread further if the government cannot be held up. Direct neighbours of Syria are Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon which are affected in multiple ways by the turmoil. His call for support is targeted to the leaders of the region which rule their countries in a similar way and show a great interest to keep the political power structure as it is. The request is attended by the wish of keeping foreign influences, in particular the influence of the USA, as low as possible. The only solution according to Assad would be a dialogue with only Syrians excluding a foreign intervention. However foreign powers,

namely Russia and the US has different visions on that.

Russia's position and support for the Assad regime is quite clear. Russia was and is advocating for a sovereign Syrian solution. Moscow states that there has been no use of chemical weapons in Syria. The S-300 deal (about an air defence missile system) is contrasted by the fear of an al-Qaida take over. Assad's demission would first lead to a vacuum of power and then to a hostile take-over by al-Qaida connected rebels.



*Bashar al-Assad. Photo: Fabio Rodrigues Pozzebom / ABr*

According to the USA there is still discussion about an intervention led by Washington but recent measures just focused on the support for Syrian refugees in Jordan as a civil engagement. But the US stays cautious because of the possible Syrian property of chemical weapons. Mistakes of the past in Iraq shouldn't be repeated and however they would have been supported by France, UK and Israel verifying the Syrian use of chemical weapons.



Free Syrian Army soldier with machine gun in Aleppo.  
Photo: Scott Bobb [VOA]

Several scenarios have been discussed, for example one possibility would be “to establish a humanitarian corridor that is 80 kilometres wide and 50 kilometres deep (31 by 50 miles), a contingent of 40,000 to 50,000 soldiers would be necessary” in cooperation/addition with a no fly-zone over Syria. A consensus dominates/prevails about/over the nature of measurements: large scale should it be and over a long period to be sustainable. Problematically would only be the number of troops to secure Syrian chemical weapons depot which would require 75,000 soldiers. A possible buffer zone could be erected along the Syrian-Jordanian border. At the same time, western leaders discussed about providing weapons to the rebel Syrian free army. But it cannot be guaranteed that these weapons will not fall into the wrong hands which in converse argument would encourage the Assad-regime in its presumptions.

**“4 MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND 1.5 MILLION REFUGEES FLEEING TO NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES”**

## Six-power talks on nuclear arms show no results in Iran

**Negotiations at Almaty** resulted again in a failure between Iran and six great powers (the USA, the UK, China, Germany, France and Russia). This time participants could not even reach an agreement on a possible future six-power meeting like before throughout the talks in February.



The US Secretary of the State John Kerry expressed his bitter criticism about the unsatisfactory outcomes. "Talks for (the sake of future) talks are not acceptable"- he said to the Reuters. Indeed there is no time to further inefficiency as Israeli officials also voiced their fears concerning Iran's ability to have in a few months the potentials for creating nuclear bomb.

Nevertheless, Western diplomats are still optimistic about the prospects of future talks between the two opposing sides. It is true that Iran at least showed some willingness to stop enriching uranium up to 20% purity in case the six great powers alleviate some of the sanctions demolishing Iranian economy.

Furthermore, a few months ago Teheran started to convert one part of its high-enriched uranium stock into a substance which is unusable for weapon production. In spite of the fact that Iran did not affirm that the country was reducing its high-enriched uranium capacity, the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency declared that there are "no particular indications to believe otherwise".

An underlying reason for the decrease could be that Iran is running out of raw uranium. The country fiercely refuted that she was suffering from raw material shortage. Tough, US think-tanks are convinced that Iran needs to rely on imported resources if she wants to carry on with piling up high-enriched uranium.

The fact that Iran recently started to negotiate with Niger- one of the world's great uranium producing countries – about strengthening economic ties could serve as a supporting evidence for the claims of US think-tanks. Niger is desperate to diversify her uranium mining partners as people

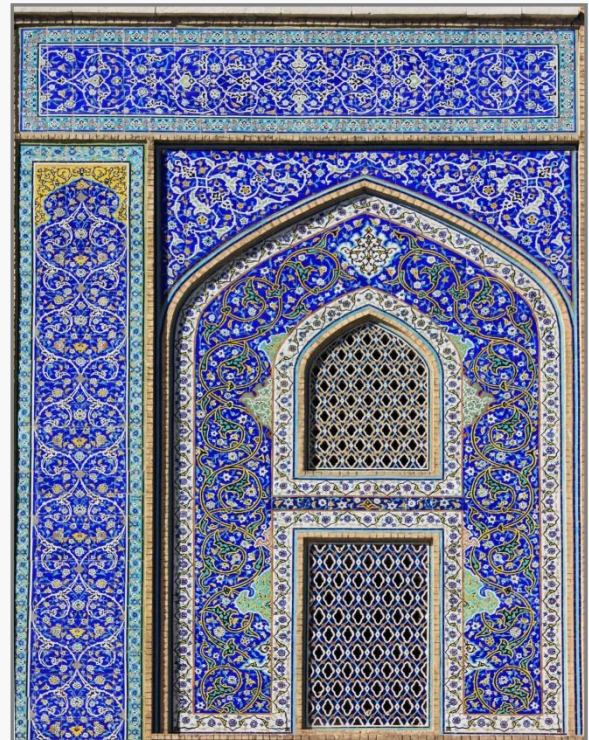
cannot tolerate anymore being exploited by a French mining near-monopoly: the Areva. Recently deepening cooperation between the two countries has a shady side, since Niger practically gives the green light to high-enriched uranium production, if she becomes a row uranium supplier of Iran.

Thus, it can be seen that the opposing sides (Iran and the six great powers with Israel) are still far from each other- confirmed Mark Fitzpatrick from the International Institute for Strategic Studies. So, the April meeting at Almaty was sentenced to death even before it started.

Nonetheless, reconciliation could be mutually beneficial for both of the belligerent sides. Iran could restore its cracking economy, the US and Europe would be liberated from permanent Iranian threat and Arab-Israeli peace might be also enhanced.

However, prospects of future dialogues are not positive at all, since both sides are certain about what they want to avoid, while they are totally uncertain about the means of agreeing on a possible resolution.

Iran seems to be persistent just as the US, Israel or other European countries. Iran will not be reintegrated to the world economy and the world politics unless the six great powers offer a consistent, unified reconciliatory plan on the basis of compromises.



Tiles of Sheikh Lotf Allah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran. Photo: مانفی [Wikimedia Commons]

“WESTERN DIPLOMATS ARE STILL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF FUTURE TALKS”

## Hamid Karzai seeks to curb CIA operations in Afghanistan

**In another** heated confrontation with the US government, President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai is resolute to stem CIA operations in country following the death of several Afghanistan children and a US agent in what he believes was an attack by illegal militia working for the US intelligence agency. The President also ordered in late February the implementation of a presidential decree which abolished so-called “parallel structures”, with the principal aim of dismantling CIA-controlled entities. Spokesman for the President Aimal Faizi said that the utilization of these parallel structures by the US “is an issue of concern for the Afghan people and the Afghan government.” According to reports, the airstrike which killed ten children was believed to have been ordered after the American who was informing the Afghan Intelligence Service was fatally injured. The US embassy refused to comment on the issue or release his name, usually indicative of intelligence operations. Sources knowledgeable on the attack however identified the individual as a US agent.



Karzai's campaign which threatens to renew questions regarding the US spy agency's extensive and highly clandestine operations in Afghanistan is yet another step in the long battle against the US and its allies to assert Afghan sovereignty. The President has already gained control of the primary US-run detention facility in Afghanistan and according to the media sources, ended unilateral night raids on insurgent hideouts that coalition commanders once described as critical to the war". Given the already volatile relationship between the two countries, Karzai's resolution comes at a critical time when Kabul and Washington are

attempting to negotiate the extent of US military presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014. Limiting the US agency's reach carries with it the potential to strike at the very core of US strategic interests in the Middle Eastern nation.



American President Barack Obama has clearly stated that the US has no intention of battling the Taliban after next year, stressing however that there is "zero option of complete US withdrawal" from Afghanistan as was the case in Iraq. Rather, the US is expected to maintain a few thousand troops, bolstered by additional soldiers from NATO allies. Afghan soldiers will be trained by the foreign troops

to counter insurrections and US Special Forces will pursue Al-Qaeda-like groups hiding out along the lawless Pakistani border.

After over a decade of monthly "ghost" payments to the offices of the Afghan President courtesy of the CIA as a means of securing influence over Afghanistan, it is uncertain whether the US is getting what they are paying for, particularly in light of Karzai's outright display of defiance. Even with the tens of millions of dollars dropped off at the offices in suitcases, backpacks and occasionally shopping bags, there is little evidence to support that the cash succeeded in buying the influence that the CIA sought. In fact, unnamed American officials went as far as stating that the payouts which were used to cover a range of off-the-books expenses instead served to fuel corruption and empower warlords, undermining the US's departure from Kabul. Instead of securing the President's good graces, seemingly the bags of cash serves to illustrate one thing thus far, that Karzai cannot be bought.

**"THAT THERE IS "ZERO OPTION OF COMPLETE U.S. WITHDRAWAL" FROM AFGHANISTAN"**



## Sudan's Bashir pays historic visit to South Sudan

**On April 12, 2013** Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and his South Sudan counterpart Salva Kiir met for the first time since the secession of Sudan in July 2011 in the world's newest country South Sudan. The visit is loaded with hopes for a peaceful future between the two former combined parts as they have been facing conflicts, mistrust and disputes especially in the border region Abyei. The area of Abyei is attractive for both since it is rich in resources and contains symbolic worth. The harmony should be kept up by providing free border traffic and economic cooperation in oil trading.

But the ambitious project is in danger as shown by a recent attack on international peacekeepers near Khartoum. It resulted in one death and two wounded persons. Militia now is in charge of the attack which



*Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir arrives in the southern capital of Juba. Picture was taken half year before South Sudan's independence. Photo: Al Jazeera English*



*Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Government of Southern Sudan. Photo: Jenny Rockett*

enforces the call for a faster disarmament of these groups to prevent war and provide sustainable peace.

It stays relevant that Sudan is still struggling to build up a new constitution because it will pave the way either into a stronger Islamist direction by taking in the Sharia law or by advocating secularity which would facilitate relations with the more liberal South Sudan.

## United States sending missile defences to Guam

**The arms race** between East and West takes the next step: after almost daily threats and the announcement for foreigners in South Korea to leave the country because of a possible “thermonuclear war” on the part of North Korea, the USA reinforce their facilities on the island of Guam, a US territory that lies some 3,380 kilometres (2,100 miles) southeast of North Korea and is home to 6,000 American military personnel. The establishment of an advanced ballistic missile defence system is justified by close possible targets in Southeast Asia, like Japan but also the clear danger to Hawaii and the North American West Coast.

But at the same time, China feels threatened by the expanded American military presence in the region since it worries about losing influence areas in the South and East Chinese Sea. The East Chinese Sea is rich in resources around the Japanese uninhabited island Senkaku and through the South Chinese Sea pass many shipping routes – for these reasons these regions are in demand – as well from ASEAN-members like the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan.

The last ASEAN summit was loaded with fears and hopes dealing with the most controversial point how the intercourse with China should proceed. In the future China will be concerned in negotiations for “a giant free trade pact” including Japan,

South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand as well as in The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which aims for a third of the world's economic output. The determining year will be 2015 with the finalization of a single market for the 10 Southeast Asian countries. Equal nuclear weapon status between North-Korea and USA is claimed by Pyongyang – but US wants first a proof of setting an end to the weapon development which will not be reached by restarting Yongbyon nuclear site, classified as the source of weapons-grade plutonium, which had been closed since 2007. Even Allies like Russia call North-Korea for restraint. The US will not accept a forced by threat recognition of North-Korea as a nuclear arms state but before facing an offensive they might as it happened with India.

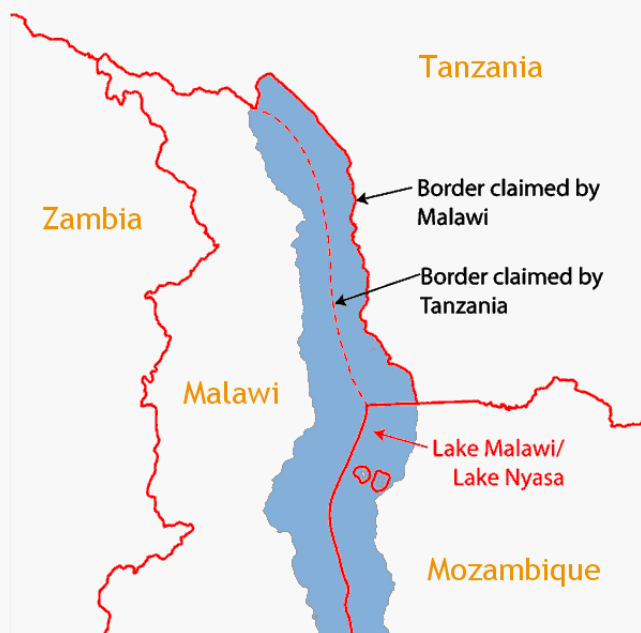


The climax from aggressive rhetoric to dangerous action, not talking about the test-launchings of missile and the military exercises, have been condemned by the G8 ministers in “strongest term” as a threat “to international peace and security.”

## Colonial legacy: border disputes

### Malawi to take Tanzania border dispute to court

The bilateral relations between Malawi and Tanzania have been affected by disagreement since the independence of Malawi in 1964. Not only opposing positions and policies towards the white minority regimes in the South but also the question of demarcation between the two states have been a contentious issue. They are abutting nations to the third largest lake of Africa (known as Lake Malawi in Malawi and as Nyasa/Niassa in Tanzania respectively in Mozambique) which is well reputed for its richness in species and oil resources.



While Tanzania claims that the border runs through the middle of the northern lake areas it was established by the colonial powers, Malawi claims that the border is the eastern coast of the lake due to an agreement in 1890.



Boat on Lake Malawi, near Likoma Island.  
Photo: ffriendly [Flickr]

Now Tanzania seems at the end of its tether and considers taking the border dispute to the International Court of Justice rather than going on with diplomatic mediations. Tanzania demands a postponement of the Malawian exploration activities until the resolve of the dispute which Malawi denies. A peaceful solution to this crisis seems to be in remote future without a decision of a higher authority.

### ICJ begins hearing Preah Vihear dispute

Preah Vihear is the border region between Cambodia and Thailand where several temple, partially in ruins, are located towards which Thailand appeared to be possessive. Thailand established even guards and military and detained a number of sculptures and monuments since the occupation in 1954. Afterwards the ownership of the land was awarded to Cambodia in 1961.

The Thailand - Cambodian boundary was first delimited by a Franco-Siamese Mixed Commission along the Dangrek range of mountains and fixed in a Treaty of March 23 in 1907. A map based on the treaty was contended by Thailand stating that Thailand only could have accepted it before in the mistaken belief that it corresponded to the 'real' watershed line which would mark Preah Vihear as Thai territory. So neither the Siamese nor the Thai government rose complaints about the map in 1950s and 60s, so the frontiers were confirmed.



### Bolivia presents maritime case to the International Court of Justice

Bolivia wants to regain its access to Pacific Ocean which Bolivia lost during the war against Chile. The treaty of peace and friendship in 1904 confirmed the Chilean annexation of 120,000 km<sup>2</sup> of former Bolivian territory including 400km coastline. In compensation of the loss, Chile granted Bolivia access to its ports but it always stayed just a consolation prize for Bolivia who continued the annual celebrations for the Day of the Sea.



Nevertheless, the maritime access isn't the only argument between them: Bolivia denied cooperation in energy-trade concerning its rich resources of natural gas with energy-poor Chile as well as concerning water rights to the common river Silala. But the Chilean president stays assured that the legal contract cannot be dismissed and that the Bolivian navy has to continue dreaming.

## Algeria sees progress in long-running Western Sahara conflict

The UN mediation gives the Algerian Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci some hope of progress in the deadlocked border dispute between Algeria and Morocco. Algeria supports the Polisario Front which claims the independence of the West Sahara since the decolonisation from the Spanish in 1975 while Morocco demands the territory to belong to it. Morocco concerns Polisario as a "terrorist organisation" accusing it responsible for violent attacks against civilians thus the country would only guarantee broad autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty which is not enough for Polisario. Lately also France set some pressure to reopen the borders, which have been closed since 1994, to stimulate cooperation and trade.



Gathering of Saharawi troops, near Tifariti (Western Sahara), celebrating the 32nd anniversary of the Polisario Front in 2005. Photo: Saharawiak [iFlickr]

## Ongoing border conflict between Yemen and Saudi caused several deaths



Since the Arab Spring reached Yemen and forced President Ali Abdullah Saleh to resign, the country drowns into chaos. It became an arena for army deserters, al-Qaeda members and separatist tribesmen whose clash lately took seven lives. To keep illegal migrants and smugglers out, Saudi Arabia is building a protecting fence which should run from the Red sea coast to the border of Oman along 1,800 km. The efficiency of this means is questionable as organized criminals already found ways to circumvent it. The situation in Yemen is changed for the worse also by sabotaging acts concerning the oil and gas pipelines which leave the country in dependency on Saudi Arabian donations and imports. Even the UN Security Council doubts that the current President Hadi will have the power to combine the forces and bring the country back to peace.

## Humanitarian crisis erupts in the Central African Republic

Since **Michel Djotodie** was declared interim president after a coup, chaos and complete disorder broke out in the Central African Republic (CAR).



*Child in a rebel camp in the north-eastern Central African Republic.  
Photo: Pierre Holtz [UNICEFCAR]*

Some 119 people have been killed since insurgents – known as Seleka – seized power - said Navanethem Pillay UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The former President Francois Bozizé fled to Cameroon after riots erupted in Bangui 24 March. Mr Djotodia served as defence minister in the former government, though abdicated in March before he took over control in the country.

Mr Djotodia could not solidify his position as “he does not have widespread international support and has fallen out with some of his former allies” – reported BBC News Africa.

In consequence of his unsuccessful consolidation of power, Mr Djotodia does not have enough control over his own armed forces, thus looting of Seleka fighters is a frequent phenomenon in the CAR.

Violence became a commonplace in the country including kidnappings, torture, sexual violence and conscripting children in the army. Only in Berberati 19 instances of sexual abuse have been officially reported to the UN and certainly there are much more cases, which remained unrevealed.

Also, Souleymane Diabate the head of UNICEF expressed his bitter regret over children in the CAR, who are practically defenceless in the society. The most vulnerable ones are children who are recruited illegally in Seleka army and children who are winding the streets alone after losing their parents during the clashes. Though, the Seleka government -instead of developing a new policy in order to help the youth- communicated that international organizations (especially the UNICEF) will handle all the acute problems related to children. Furthermore, Seleka officials are convinced that the majority of children joined the army on voluntary basis, which according to their views is not illegal at all.

Nonetheless, the most striking issue is that try as they may, even international organizations cannot lend a hand to those who are in need. Recently, warehouses, and food stores have been robbed in Bangui and Kaga Bandoro. 30 tonnes of various materials containing food, water, medicines and other supplies to maintain personal hygiene can be rapidly deployed if it was made sure that rebels will not loot the aid convoy on its way to Bangui. The UNICEF is constantly monitoring the region to determine whether aid supplies will reach their original targets in safety or not.

Thus, international NGOs and other organizations try to do their bests in order to improve living conditions of the people in the CAR. However, it is quite impossible

unless political coups happen on a less regular basis in the country. Patterns show that at least once a decade state of emergency is declared in the region. "Each time, everything that civil society, humanitarian agencies and their partners have managed to build up – infrastructure, personnel, collective memory, processes – is broken down and they are forced to start over again"- added Souleymane Diabate.

To avoid further political struggles, a firm, democratic government with conscious and coherent policies has to be established. If the people of CAR feel insecure the Seleka government will be overthrown shortly, just as their predecessors were removed.



*A little girl with her bottle of water is coming back from the well, Boromata, northeastern CAR. Photo: Pierre Holtz [UNICEF CAR]*

## US criticise ECOWAS as French troops leave Mali

**Fears of possible** reprisal attacks of Islamic extremists are not irrelevant after the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) troops were unable to complete their mission successfully in the Northern part of Mali. A senior Pentagon official besides criticising the ECOWAS also expressed his strong disapproval of the partial withdrawal of French troops.

A coup in March 2012 led to major disorder in the country, when secular Tuareg rebels took over control in the Northern part of Mali. However, a few months later the frail Tuareg leadership was easily chased away by the AQIM, an extremist Islamic organization (better known as the al Qaeda's North African branch).



Photo: Nathanael Callon

ECOWAS forces have been criticised by the US when they left French troops in complete isolation which were trying to

thwart attacks of the terrorists in North Mali. That time multi-national African troops were deployed unhurriedly and ineffectively. Since then conditions of the multi-ethnic African army have not improved at all, so they do not have the capacity to relieve departing French troops. "Right now, the ECOWAS force isn't capable at all. What you saw there, it is a completely incapable force. That has to change." said Michael Sheehan, US Assistant Secretary of Defence for Special Operations.

Former quick advance of France in extremist-controlled North Mali was warmly welcomed by several US officials. The majority of the rebels linked to al-Qaeda escaped from key cities of the region, yet many still carry on with guerrilla warfare. Thus, a strong, proficient ECOWAS standing army could have pivotal role in stabilising Northern territories after French troops leave the country.

Not only are US and European leaders afraid of terrorist reprisal, but also refugees, who fled the country when insurgences broke out. Some 270,000 people have been displaced and further 170,000 fled to neighbouring countries mainly Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger, according to the United Nations. The circumstances of those who were displaced at Mbera camp – one of the most numerous refugee camps – are



gradually improving. According to UN reports aliment resources are sufficient and water supplies are steady in the camp, though it is a question of time until when they can maintain such promising improvements. In contrast, a fresh wave of refugees, which arrived at a desolate area nearby Menetes and Midal is in a critical situation. People do not dare to capture their home villages, since they are intimidated by possible sequels of fights.

It is clear that the region has to be stabilised as soon as possible. Though, sheer pumping of Western money and military force to the region will not bring sustainable peace in North Mali.

Hopefully, the recently submitted UN resolution which aims at enhancing the stabilisation of major cities, restoring democratic governance, promoting



*Pro-government Militia members training in Sevare, Mali in October 2012.  
Photo: Anne Look [VOA]*

national unity and re-establishing order all across the country will ease slashes. Also, UN troops are officially banned from launching offensive military operations except in case of imminent threat. Peace cannot be established by violent actions, thus the UN resolution could be a far-reaching initiative act.

**“SOME 270,000 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DISPLACED AND FURTHER 170,000 FLED TO NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES”**

## The new Venezuelan President: Nicolas Maduro - what are the expectations?



*Nicolás Maduro. Photo: Valter Campanato [Agência Brasil]*

**“On the one hand** he is one of the PSUV's most convinced leftist, anti-imperialist radical, and on the other he can be soft-spoken and conciliatory.” – said Javier Corrales, a professor of political science at Amherst College to the Guardian.

The personality of the President is as controversial as the way he succeeded Chavez, who died of cancer on 5 March.

Opposition candidates are permanently complaining about electoral fraud, which probably contributed to victory of Maduro. The fact that the President defeated his major opponent by less than a 1.5% margin gives ground for suspicion. Nevertheless, the electoral commission is convinced that the system is well-armoured against error and swindle.

Maduro was indeed a devoted follower of the former President, so critiques believe that the opposition basically had no chance to gain power.

However, he originally came from an ordinary leftist Venezuelan family with insignificant political bonds. He never graduated from school; instead he joined the Socialist League and worked as a bus driver for Caracas Metro Company. His first connection with Chávez-politics was established when he joined the MBR-200 (the military movement of Chávez). Meanwhile he campaigned fiercely for the liberation of the former President after his unsuccessful coup in 1992, he got deeply involved in the growing Chavista

movement. Later he became one of the founding members of the Movement of the Fifth Republic, the party which nominated Chavez as a president.

Afterwards, the political career of Maduro gradually advanced. By 2006 he became the minister of foreign affairs in the Chavista government. Right before his death Chávez asked his fellow people as a part of his “final testament” to vote for Maduro. Thus after all, everyone expected that Maduro, who had appeared and acted in the political arena in the shadow of Chávez, would carry on with the tough, anti-American rhetoric of the former leader. Nevertheless, he has been considered always as an approachable, sympathetic man of the crowds, who could easily get in contact with ordinary people. The president of the electoral commission Tibisay Lucena said that the results were “faithful reflection of the wishes of the Venezuelan citizens”.



*Chavista poster: "let us realize Bolívar and Martí's dream". Photo: Montarde [Wikimedia Commons]*

Meanwhile, people of Venezuela are mostly enthusiastic about their freshly inaugurated President, US politicians are highly critical of him because of his long-standing friendship with Fidel Castro and his anti-American attitude. Will Maduro open a brand new chapter in Venezuelan politics by initiating reconciliation with the US? Will he be able to step out from the shadow of Chávez? Is he fully determined to carry on with anti-western politics? The questions will be shortly answered; predictions are no more punctual than mere guesses now. Everything is a matter of time.

**“THE PERSONALITY OF THE PRESIDENT IS AS CONTROVERSIAL AS THE WAY HE SUCCEEDED CHAVEZ”**

## Chance for China to get a foothold in the Arctic

**On April 15th**, China and Iceland signed a free trade agreement – China's first agreement with a European country. But the cooperation between the two diverse countries will expand, involved by mutual economic interests: Iceland does not only provide hunting ground for fish but as well for mineral resources and in addition, a tourist destination for the Chinese upper-class city population yearning for nature and fresh air. Though the deeper Chinese interest in exploring the Arctic region is about taking advantage of an alternative shipping route across the Northeast Passage which offers a faster, less pirate-polluted alternative to the Suez Canal. China, known as an environmental sinner, is dealing for its own account exploiting the global-warming affected sea ice area which experienced a reduction of thickness and immovability of the polar ice already. As the region could be ice-free in 2030, approximately 5% of the global shipping and 15% of China's trading would pass through the Northern Sea Route which would imply an even more accelerated global warming caused by the diesel-using

vessels producing black carbon. The colder conditions of the route would also demand rearrangements of the cargo ship equipment when collisions are more likely to happen and an oil spill is almost impossible to be combated in cold water.

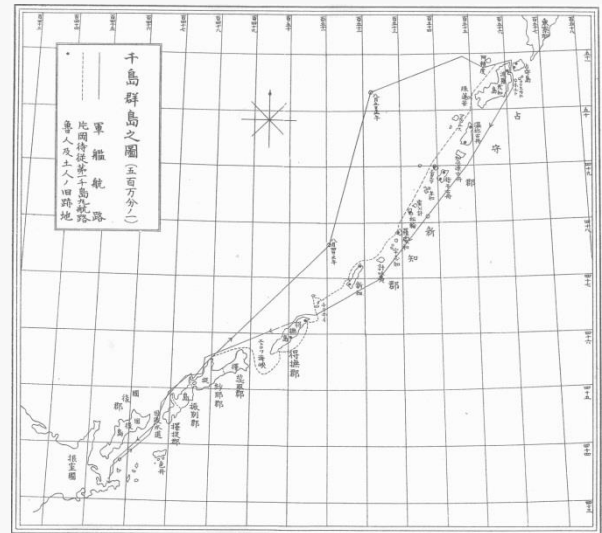
But Iceland's president advocates for a closer involvement of the South-eastern Asian countries, especially China, which already participate in the Arctic Council. In question stays if this extended involvement would lead to awareness of a common destiny, shared responsibilities and to the benefit of the region or only to the satisfaction of economical self centered interests.



*Politicians at the Arctic frontiers conference in Tromsø in January, 2012. Ambassador of China to Norway watches as Nordic politicians discuss Arctic issues. At the moment, China wished to obtain observer status in the Arctic Council, but this was blocked by Norway.  
Photo: Bjoertvedt [Wikimedia Commons]*

## Russia and Japan raise their bilateral relationship

**On April 29**, the Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe visited Russia officially after 10 years for the first time again. The size of the mission including 120 businessmen showed the extraordinary importance of this meeting. As the two countries never signed a peace treaty, which is now on the agenda, and experienced a territorial dispute over a chain of islands, known as the Northern Territories in Japan and the Southern Kuril Islands in Russia, the bilateral relations were progressing slowly “in a positive way”.



*A map of Kuril Islands from Gisuke Sasamori's 1893 book Chishima Tanken*



*One of the Kuril Islands*

But there is chance to overcome the conflict in favour of trade and in exchange of Russian mineral resources and natural gas against Japanese technologies.

The cooperation will continue in several sectors - also offering an alternative after the experience of Fukushima. Furthermore, the Russian – Japanese ties can form a counterweight to China and the USA – as well as Japan did not get over being overtaken economically by China.

## EU lifts sanctions against Myanmar

**Recently**, all sanctions have been eliminated, which were imposed against Myanmar by the European Union, apart from an arms embargo. Aung San Suu Kyi, an opposition MP welcomed the decision saying that “national reconciliation and progress in democratization cannot depend any more on sanctions”.



*Aung San Suu Kyi arrives to give speech to the supporters during 2012 by-election campaign at her constituency Kawhmu township, Myanmar.  
Photo: Htoo Tay Zar [Wikimedia Commons]*

The restrictions of the EU were removed after Myanmar (commonly known as Burma) released at least 30 political prisoners. The amnesty was implemented by Thein Sein, who became President in 2010 after the brutal military rule in the country. Many actors in the arena of world

politics consider this event as a step towards democratization. An EU statement also confirmed that the intention of the organization by eliminating sanctions was to encourage further changes in Myanmar. However, it is “far from the end of the story” since considerable controversies aroused around democratization processes in the country.

First of all, it is believed that 40 former rebels, who were incarcerated for drug trafficking were also identified as political prisoners and released from jail.

Secondly, figures of government officials about the release are merely different from the data published by human rights activists. According to Channel News Asia a government official claimed that at least 93 inmates were pardoned on humanitarian grounds including three foreigners. Accordingly, it can be seen that the government system in Myanmar, despite recent substantial changes is still not transparent and accountable enough.

Thought, the ethnic cleansing scandal, which erupted exactly on the same day when the EU released nearly all the

remaining prohibitions, raised further issues about democratization processes in Myanmar. The Human Rights Watch reported that they have evidence for ethnic cleansing, which happened during violent clashes between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims on western Rakhine areas in June 2012. A state of emergency was announced all across Rakhine state, which practically means that the military could fully take over the administrative control of the territory. The army was supposed to protect Muslims who fled their homes. In contrast, in several cases soldiers acted in the opposite way assisting Buddhists during the fights. The HRW discovered four mass graves which were created by security forces in order to eradicate the evidence for the massacre.

As a response a government spokesman said that “The government will not pay attention to such one-sided reports”. Other government reports also affirmed that politicians were not responsible for the incident. However, the role of authorities in the cleansing remains highly disputable.



*A Rakhine house being burned during 2012 Rohingya riots.  
Photo: Hmuu Zaw*

Owing to these facts, it might be possible that the EU decision was premature. The organization lost considerable leverage over the country while Myanmar still has to go along a long path until the state becomes fully democratized. Yet, it is also true that democracy cannot be established by implying sanctions. Thus, it can be stated that in spite of the controversies, eliminating prohibitions was a dangerous, but necessary step for the EU if the organization wanted to promote alterations in Myanmar.

**“ETHNIC CLEANSING HAPPENED DURING VIOLENT CLASHES  
BETWEEN RAKHINE BUDDHISTS AND ROHINGYA MUSLIMS  
ON WESTERN RAKHINE AREAS IN JUNE 2012”**

## ■ News in Brief

### World news

#### **UN General Assembly resolves upon an arms trade treaty**

■ A historical breakthrough is marked by the adoption of a worldwide arms trade treaty. Even the abstention of the great arms exporters Russia and China and the dissenting votes from Syria, North-Korea and Iran could not stop the first step of the implementation after seven years of negotiation. For the ratification 50 votes are needed before it will be coming into force which is probably going to take several years. Critics say that the treaty lacks in balance between importers and exporters and in serious punishment for failure to comply.



#### **Uproar in the UN**

■ After the Court Appeal held up the UN immunity in the question of the Srebrenica massacre claimed by the organization 'mothers of Srebrenica', a member of the organization, Munira Subasic, was presumably expelled from a meeting in the UN building for wearing a T-shirt with the word Srebrenica on it. To protest against this exclusion, several countries boycotted the meeting and organized an independent press conference with the victims. The role of Serbian members is still questionable – somewhere in between victim and offender, in between denial of the massacre and a blamestorming on almost everything that is Serbian.

#### **Obama meets with African leaders in the White House**

■ Obama invited the leaders of Sierra Leone, Malawi, Senegal and Cape Verde to the White House in preparation to his Africa trip at the end of June. Obama forged for sustainable peace in favor of improved economic relations. He praised the exemplary progress in democratic development of the four countries but stated as well that there is still some work to do, e.g. "Sierra Leone's civil war, Malawi's recent constitutional crisis, political turmoil in Senegal and formerly low-level growth in Cape Verde".





## ■ News in Brief

### World news

#### **Russia urge US and North Korea to avoid escalation**

■ On 29th March 2013, Russia urged the US and North Korea to end an escalating cycle of dangerous provocations after Pyongyang put its missile forces on high alert and American stealth bombers flew practice bomb runs over the Korean Peninsula. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the tit-for-tat moves were becoming a “vicious cycle” that could “simply get out of control”, as Reuters reported. The minister further stated by referring to US actions, said Russia is concerned that in addition to UN Security Council sanctions aimed at Pyongyang's nuclear program. It is also noted that Russia and North Korea are the key allies and the United States is key ally with South Korea. Therefore, anything concerning North Korea, Russia is keeping close eye on the situation.



#### **Wikileaks reached at record by releasing 1.7 million documents of the US**

■ On April 8th, 2013, Whistleblowing website WikiLeaks published more than 1.7 million US records covering diplomatic or intelligence reports on every country in the world. The data released included diplomatic records from 1973 to 1976 covering traffic of cables, intelligence reports and congressional correspondence. WikiLeaks described the Public Library of US Diplomacy (Plus D) as the world's largest searchable collection of U.S. confidential, or formerly confidential, diplomatic communications.



## ■ News in Brief

# Violent attacks

### **US officials: “no links found among Boston suspects and foreign militant groups”**

■ On April 15, two Chechen brothers posed explosive devices in the audience of the Boston marathon. Three people died and 250 were wounded. On the run, one police officer and one of the brothers lost their lives. The second brother has been caught later hiding in a boat. He will be “charged with using a weapon of mass destruction in the bombing deaths, as well as malicious destruction of property, counts that could carry the death penalty”. As motivation for the attempt, the younger brother declared solidarity with the Muslim world suffering from American attacks and causing many civilian deaths. A link to a terrorist organization can be excluded so far.



### **Alarming situation of Christians in Egypt**

■ Several clashes between Muslims and Coptic Christians caused 8 deaths. As the situation had been worse for a while, the tight boundaries of president Morsy with the Muslim Brotherhood raise doubts who are the real rulers of the country. The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party called on authorities to “reveal the plots [aimed at sowing strife between different Egyptian groups], punish the perpetrators and curtail the threat.”

### **Iraq’s provincial elections disturbed by several smaller attacks**

■ It was the first provincial election after the departure of the US troops. The voter participation only reached less than half of 14 million citizens who were entitled and called to vote. The fear of extremist attacks kept probably many away from the polling stations – justifiably. At least four people were wounded marking the ongoing quarrels among the Sunni Islamists and Shi'ite-led government. This election was a trial for the upcoming parliamentary elections until then, the government should have figured out the tense security situation for the collective multiethnic good.

## ■ News in Brief

# Bilateral and diplomatic relations

### **31st anniversary of Falklands invasion**

■ 31 years after unsuccessful Argentinean invasion on the Falkland Islands, known as the Malvinas in Argentina, Buenos Aires still claims the territory to be Argentine. A group of demonstrators in front of the British embassy in the capital shares this opinion and was even willing to fight physically for it. The referendum in which the islanders voted overwhelmingly to remain British is called “a parody” by the Argentine President Kirchner. For her, it marks the continuation of British colonialism with the accusation that UK has a special interest in the natural resources and in oil.

### **Genocide trial against Guatemala's former dictator**

■ First time in history, a former head of the state is accused for genocide and crime against humanity in his own country by a local court. Ríos Montt, who ruled the country between 1982 and 1983, is held responsible in the killings of more than 1,700 indigenous Ixil Mayans. Half of the atrocities committed in the Guatemalan Civil War 1960-1996 happened during the reign of Montt, the Historical Clarification Commission stated. While Montt alleged that it was a political lawsuit and that he just had acted to bring the country back on track, for the members of the victims' stays how high he will be sentenced.

### **Zambia closes border after Tanzania religious clashes**

■ The predominantly Christian Zambia closed the border points after a break-out on a market among Christians and Muslims about ritual slaughtering. The break-out might be explained by rivalry through cross-border trade. Only the intervention of the police could have stopped the arguing parties and for the common safety the borders stayed closed from both sides.

### **Massacre in Nigeria Spurs Outcry Over Military Tactics**

■ In fights between the Nigerian military and the sect Islamist Boko Haram (translated “literacy is sin”) recently up to 200 people died. The military was looking for suspects around the local Mosque in Baga firing on anything which moved without dignity. But the sect seems to be out of state control being backed up by organization outside of the country.

### **UK opens new embassy in Mogadishu**

■ 22 years after the pullback of British diplomats from war-torn Somalia, UK reopens an embassy in Mogadishu. At the same time, it is a commitment to cooperate with the Somali government for sustainable peace and democracy. Britain is the first country which reestablishes its embassy – may many others follow this example.

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### **Historic visit of the Egyptian president Morsy in Sudan**

■ The meeting between Morsy and the Sudanese president al-Bashir stood completely under the banner of widening cooperation in terms of “trade integration, transportation, investment, and the ‘four freedoms’ pact, which gives citizens of each country the right to freely enter and conduct economic activities”. At the same time, both refrained from posing a threat on someone by this cooperation but that they were aware of “common enemies” which hasn’t been more specified.

### **Reopening of the Palestinian embassy in Kuwait**

■ After 23 years, a Palestinian flag is waving again over the embassy in Kuwait which was removed due to the Iraqi invasion in 1990. A mass expulsion of Palestinians followed who mostly had come to work in Kuwait which was worsened by the aftermath of it. The reopening is loaded with hope that Kuwait will continue its financial support and open its labor market again to Palestinian professionals.

### **Okinawa: American land return or widening of army bases?**

■ A new agreement has been signed between the USA and Japan concerning the military bases on Okinawa for a reduction of American military presence on the island. Despite of the signature, contradictory information concerns that it will be more a relocation than a withdrawal from the area. Questionable stay as well the consequences for the rural population as the farmers and if it will prosper from it. In addition, several cases of rape were revealed committed by army members which will tense the bilateral relations even more.

### **Taiwan-China relations: concepts and territory issues**

■ On the 20th anniversary of diplomatic talks between Taiwan and China, the Taiwanese president Ma Ying-jeou Monday confirmed his conformity to the “One-China-policy” which states the Chinese foundations of bilateral negotiations. He pointed out that his country wants to benefit from the improved economic cooperation, including the signing of a historic trade agreement and direct flights across the Strait. But critics see this commitment as a threat towards the Taiwanese sovereignty, weakening the country vis-à-vis with 3rd parties.

### **Russian American quarrel reaches next level**

■ Moscow recently published a list of US officials banned from Russia as an answer to the Magnitsky list which was published by the US after the mysterious circumstances of the death of Russian whistleblowing tax lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in a state prison. With the latest American release of 18 new names of Russian persons who were supposedly involved in the Magnitsky affair, alleged for human rights abuse, Russia justifies the names of its list with the implication in torture and the indefinite detention of prisoners in the [US] Guantanamo prison camp. It remains to be seen where the war of lists will take the bilateral relations.

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## ■ News in Brief

# Human Rights

### **First woman to run for Pakistani parliamentary elections**

■ Badam Zari is 40 years old and is deeply veiled like most of the women from the conservative north-western tribal region in Pakistan. But her mission is clear: She takes up position for widows and their children who have been harmed by highly controversial unmanned aerial vehicles. Furthermore she pledges for better education and health care. Her family has been very supportive as her candidature is concerned to fit to the cultural frame. But it reveals also the deep cleavages in the country where some men already decided that their women will not vote.

### **Nepal: Amnesty as the opponent of justice**

■ After slowly recovering from the aftermath of civil war, Nepal is risks future trouble by granting amnesty to war criminals of both sides. The “set up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of a Comprehensive Peace Accord” should cure the wounds of war but the victims will never forget and find peace if the guilty parts don't have to face punishment. The fear of high influential suspects continuing in high positions is real, soothe UN send a request to have examinations before the implementation of the Commission.

### **Hamas plans to educate boys and girls at separate schools**

■ The Palestinian organization for Islamic resistance wants to teach children aged over nine in single-sex-schools as well as there are already existing ones for older children. This is one step further towards a stronger conformity to Islam laws and widens the gap to the Israeli education as they mutually accuse each other “of teaching their children a distorted version of history and geography.”

### **“US engaged in torture after 9/11 attacks”, review concludes**

■ On April 16, 2013, A review of at least 600 pages concluded that “it is indisputable that the United States engaged in the practice of torture” and that the nation's highest officials bore ultimate responsibility for it. It further stated that “the kind of considered and detailed discussions that occurred after 9/11 directly involving a president and his top advisers on the wisdom, propriety and legality of inflicting pain and torment on some detainees in our custody.” It confirms a report by Human Rights Watch that one or more Libyan militants were water boarded by the C.I.A., challenging the agency's longtime assertion that only three al-Qaeda prisoners were subjected to the near-drowning technique. In addition, the United States is a signatory to the international Convention Against Torture, which requires the prompt investigation of allegations of torture and the compensation of its victims.

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## ■ News in Brief

### Middle East

#### **Israel celebrates Remembrance and Independence Day**

■ On April 8 – the day of Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Israel came to a still stand for 2 minutes to remember the 6 million Shoah victims caused by the systematical murder committed by the German Nazi regime. According to the organisers, it was not just a day to remember the past but to put up a message for the future as many Jews still are facing Holocaust-deniers and Anti-Semitism. A happier occasion offered the 65th anniversary of the Israeli independence on April 15. The celebrations happened under the banner of a call for unity to offer people with different conceptions a good living in the same state.

#### **UK officials predicted war in 1948**

■ After the termination of the UN mandate, the British left Palestine in the awareness that violence would erupt. Jewish terrorist groups and the expanded take-over of more and more Arab land lead to the first Arab-Israeli war. Arab nationalism was seen in a crisis and therefore not too dangerous in contrast to the Jewish history.



#### **Arab League initiates territory-trade-off among Israel and Palestine**

■ A movement towards a peaceful solution to the Mideast conflict seems close: an exchange of territory, but the Israeli head of state Netanjahu stated already that the core conflict is located deeper. Palestinians would receive a compensation for the Israeli occupied territories which became their territory during the Six Day War of 1967. Before Palestine claimed to regain these territories but even with a mutual agreement, Palestine will keep up its disregard for Israel as a Jewish state since it would degrade the Palestinians still living in these areas.

## ■ News in Brief Remembrance

### **Margaret Thatcher died at the age of 87**

■ On April 8, Margaret Thatcher known as the “Iron Lady” was found dead after several years of suffering under dementia. She was the first female prime minister and became famous by her conservative and strict way of leading the country out of crisis in the 1980s. Even in her death, she splits the British Island into two parties as she did before by the decision for a social clear cutting: The ones who appreciate her for the merits of the nation and the others who saw her as a “witch”.



### **April 24: Armenians mark 98th anniversary of genocide**

■ On April 24 in 1915, the deportations of Armenians in Constantinople started, continued by mass displacement and culminating in genocide which is denied until today by Turkish officials. The march to remember the victims in Tsiternakaberd should also pose a sign against xenophobia and racial discrimination.



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