

"Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues"

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About CRP News & Background

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US-Russia talks on Ukraine

The war in south-eastern Ukraine, which started in April, 2014, and induced a major disagreement between the Russian Federation and the United States along with Europe, cooled down to a certain degree after the recent Minsk Peace Treaties. Due to this development diplomats and politicians from the all sides are interested in finding a resolution to the conflict have received more time to act. The US Secretary of State John Kerry had a meeting with President Vladimir Putin during

his recent visit to Sochi, which was the highest-level talk of a US official with Russian leadership since the beginning of the crisis. The meeting lasted for eight hours and has been welcomed by both sides as a step to achieving mutual understanding.

The West criticizes Russia for annexing the Crimean peninsula and supporting the rebels in Donetsk and Lugansk and has imposed sanctions against the country, which are believed to be one of the only ways of pressuring it. In a response to these,



The meeting of John Kerry and Vladimir Putin on 12 May 2015 . Photo: Kremlin.ru



Russia has put contrary sanctions on most of import and blacklisted a number of Western officials from entering its territory. During the meeting Kerry made it very clear that the cease fire between the rebels and Ukrainian troops (which is still being violated by the both sides) has to be implemented as strictly as possible, if Russia wants to scale down the sanctions any time soon. Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, on his hand, mentioned that imposing further sanctions against Russia would only lead to a “dead end”, and that Moscow is ready to cooperate only on an equal basis and without pressure. French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela

collaborating with the US intelligence service.

This was not the first time when separatists accused the US for interfering in Ukraine’s internal affairs, as their movement itself was established as a response to the supposedly Western-backed revolution in Kyiv during winter, 2014. The fighters of the two people’s republics were also arresting western journalists and other aid workers, accusing them for being spies or spreading lies about their movement.

On the contrary, Ukraine has been accusing Russia for inducing the conflict and backing the rebels ever since the first separatist manifestations started. This point

“Moscow is ready to cooperate only on an equal basis and without pressure”

Merkel are also negotiating with Russia for the full implementation of the Minsk treaties and have scheduled a meeting for July 10 to overview the progress on ceasing the use of heavy weapons in the conflict and restoring the economic relations of the troubled region with the rest of Ukraine.

In the meantime, Ukrainian military and the rebels continue the process of exchanging prisoners. Two US aid workers have been released by the separatists and sent back to their homes. The two men working for the International Rescue Committee (IRC) NGO were arrested in April along with 35 other ICR workers after the militants raided the offices of the organization in Donetsk, accusing it for espionage and

of view is also supported by some of the Western countries and the Russian opposition, which has recently posted a report, written by Boris Nemtsov, a recently murdered Kremlin critic, claiming that at least 220 Russian soldiers had died in several key battles in Donbass. While Russia



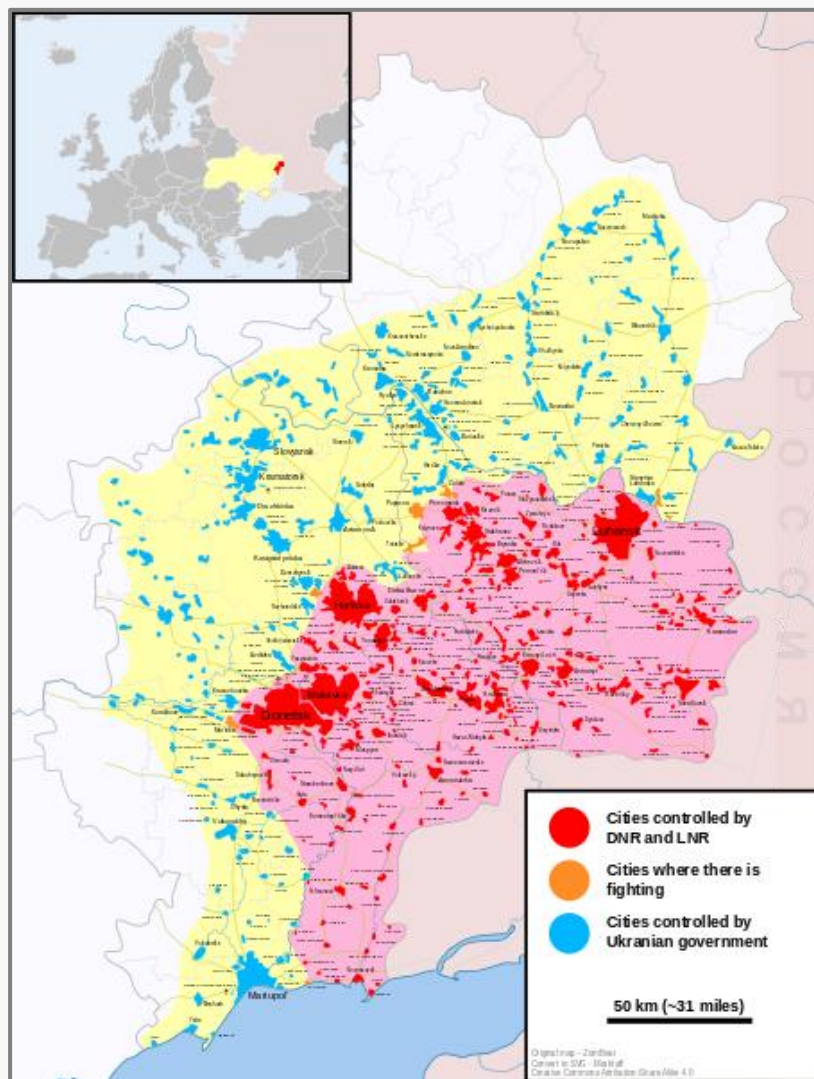
Battalion "Donbas" in Donetsk region, Ukraine. Photo: Wikimedia Commons



denies all accusations and refutes any supposed proofs of its involvement in the conflict, Ukraine remains persistent in its position. Two recently captured rebel fighters confessed that they were members of the Russian military, and were following orders of the Russian military command.

In a response to that, Russian television aired an interview with the wife of one of the soldiers, where she said that her husband had quit the army long before he went to Ukraine. With all this happening,

along with the mysterious death of one of the separatist leaders, Oleg Mozgovoi, it is still too early to make any assumptions about the future outcomes of the conflict. The tensions in Russian and Ukrainian societies, accompanied by sheer amounts of hatred for each other, may lead to hard consequences for the whole region. Its fate now lies in the hands of the diplomats that are trying to find a resolution that would please all sides involved in the Ukrainian crisis.



Map of the current situation in South-East Ukraine. Map: Wikimedia Commons



New European agenda on migration

If in the past the European problems were far from the American continent, today, overseas commentators are laughing about European decision-making on the Mediterranean emergency. According to Anne Applebaum, director of the Global Transitions Program, historian and journalist for the Washington Post, Europe is unable to manage immigration, specially that comes from Libya, often considered out from the agenda. While the situation off the Mediterranean Sea becomes more dangerous and complicated, the number of immigrants who leave the Libyan coast for the European dream is increasing on a daily basis. Sea accidents are in a greater amount: many migrants are saved, but also many of them drown, starve or killed by fellow immigrants in the heart of Mediterranean. In April, more than 800 migrants were drown in a single accident. Europe's reacton was "an emergency meeting where every heads of government expressed their preoccupation". The American journalist said: "The truth is that, even as the Libyan crisis was expanded, everybody knew that the Western effort was inadequate". David O' Sullivan, EU ambassador to the United States rejected



The EU's new immigration quota plan. Orange: derogations in asylum policy; Red: rejection. Map: Wikimedia Commons

the statement and took the party of the Italian Minister Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy who works for solution of the Mediterranean emergency. On 13 May, the European Commission presented a European Agenda on Migration in order to respond and fight the Mediterranean crisis. This is a concrete proposal to save lives and to prevent innocent deaths. The new agenda will work about these conditions: distributing of



refugees among the Members States according to four parameters: population, GDP, unemployment rate and percentage of refugees already in the country; reducing the incentives for irregular immigration with the prevention and the mitigation of these elements: poverty, war and persecution. In this case, the role of EU delegates is important to improve the cooperation between states. Another disincentive to irregular immigration is to fight smugglers and traffickers by-cooperating with third countries, planning new actions based on intercultural dialogue, capturing and destroying vessels before those are used by criminal networks. The new measures also include the strengthening of Triton and Poseidon Operations with an increase of the capacity and the means.

It was also announced that the border management will focus not only on the strengthening of Frontex's role, but also creating new forms of cooperation between third countries. It will be important to help them managing their borders. The asylum policy will be organised more clearly between the European countries, in fact, to fight the abuse of this procedure, the Commission will work with the European Asylum Support Office and Member States as well in order to develop many

guidelines. Other restrictive measures, e.g. the systematic identification and fingerprinting will be introduced. However, in order to reach success, it is also important to evaluate the opportunities and create a new system for dialogue with social partners.

The High Representative Federica Mogherini said: "With this bold agenda, the European Union has proven itself ready to address the plight of those escaping from wars, persecution and poverty. Migration is a shared responsibility of all Member States and all member States are called now to contribute to tackling this historical challenge. And this is not only a European but a global challenge: with this agenda we confirm and broaden our cooperation with the countries of origin and transit in order to save lives, clamp down on smuggling networks and protect those in need". The phenomenon of immigration is a social phenomenon particularly complex with several peculiarities: the mobility, the history and the cultural, psychographic and group variables. The treaties signed by the EU countries are based on a sense of solidarity between Member States, mutual respect and the establishment of an intercultural dialogue. The European Union intends to invest in people, fighting inequality and poverty.

“The European Union has proven itself ready to address the plight of those escaping from wars, persecution and poverty”



Increased external supports in Syria



US help to the opposition forces in Syria. Photo: SMSgt George Thompson

May marked the intensification of the involvement of external actors in the Syrian civil war. Both the government forces and the rebels received increased support from their allies.

Iranian-backed Lebanese Shia group Hezbollah has been openly supporting President Bashar al-Assad since 2013. Its leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, has recently vowed to expand his involvement in the fights in response to the growing power of extremist groups (such as the Islamic State and al-Qaeda). His announcement at a ceremony marking the fifteenth anniversary of Lebanon's independence from Israel came after Hezbollah and Assad's army made considerable advances against

Syrian opposition in the Qalamoun region on the 8th of May. The army, supported by Nasrallah's troops, seized Talat Moussa, the highest peak in the area. The offensive came at a time when Assad lost great areas at the northwest border with Turkey and the Nasib crossing with Jordan to opposition fighters.

Forces of the opposition have also received support from Turkey and the United States, who have in principle agreed to provide them with air support. The scheme is aimed at sending 15000 troops to Syria to fight Islamic State militants and would protect rebel forces trained in Turkey. However, Mevlut Cavusoglu, Ankara's foreign minister, refused to specify the kind of



US help to the opposition forces in Syria. Photo: SMSgt George Thompson





Doctors treating injured rebel fighters and civilians in Aleppo. Photo: Scott Bobb

air support given and if it would include American drones flown from Incirlik Air Base in the Turkish city of Adana. "How it is going to be provided is the responsibility of the army", added Cavusoglu concerning the support. Contrary to Turkey, which aimed to expand the programme to fighting Assad's forces, the US insists on concentrating on the Islamic State group in the country, while

acknowledging that recruits will have to defend themselves against all sides. Disagreements between the Turkish and the American party about the operation's targets and about who to train have caused significant delays in the programme. The US has also rejected Turkey's idea of guaranteeing a buffer area and a no-fly zone in Syria.

The country is facing a humanitarian crisis caused by the war, which has killed 220,000 people by the middle of May and almost 12 million Syrians have been forced to leave their homes; this indicates that over half of the population needs assistance. In this disastrous situation, it is unclear whether the victory of any of the fighting parties would be able to guarantee short-term and long-term development.



USAID Assistant Administrator Lindborg plays with Syrian refugees. Photo: US Department of State



Islamic State brings new terror

The Islamic State has already brought major havoc to Syria, Iraq and other Arab countries along with organising terror acts in the rest of the world, and it seems that it is not planning to slow down by any means, even though two of its key figures were killed during this month.

The second-in-command of Islamic State Abdul Rahman Mustafa Mohammed was killed while visiting a mosque near Tel Afar

very heart of the IS which has suffered heavy losses in the fighting of recent months.

Abu Sayyaf, a key IS commander was killed in a raid by the US special forces in Eastern Syria overnight, 15 to 16 May. He resisted capture and died in a heavy gunfight in al-Omar. His wife, Umm Sayyaf was captured and is now held in Iraq, as she might possess valuable information. The special

“The special force operatives have also recovered a number of computers and other devices used by the terrorists”

by an airstrike. It is still uncertain which country has led the attack, as the US officials deny that they would have targeted a mosque.

Abdul Rahman was believed to be taking the highest command role in the IS after the main leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, had been incapacitated by an airstrike in March. BBC reporters have confirmed the death, which means another strike at the

force operatives have also recovered a number of computers and other devices used by the terrorists, containing valuable data on how the organization operates.

Despite these serious losses, IS has captured the Iraq city of Ramadi, the Syrian-Iraq border along with the city of al-Tanf, and are also now controlling more than a half of Syrian territories. These major territorial gains will make the coordination and



supplying of the IS much easier, which might lead to even more aggression in future. The terrorists are now pressing eastwards to the Euphrates Valley, city of Habbaniya, where the governmental forces are trying to plan a counter-attack. Capturing that region would mean linking up directly with IS-controlled Falluja, which is close to Baghdad and can be used as a foothold for further attacks. A 3,000 soldier Shiite militia group has joined the pro-governmental forces in Habbaniya in order to help them with their counter-offence. A tragic IS-related event also took place in the United States, in Texas, where two

terrorists attacked a Mohammad cartoon contest near Dallas, making this the first high-profile IS attack on the United States. White House spokesman Josh Earnest though said that it is "too early to say" whether the Islamist organization had a direct connection to the attack. IS announced its connection to the terrorist act on its al-Bayan radio station. It is hard to say if IS managed to establish deep connections in the US and will be able to proceed with its attacks. Its offence in Syria and Iraq, though, is quite troubling on its own, and should receive as much attention as possible.



*Territories controlled by IS as of 6 May 2015.
Map: Wikimedia Commons*



UN fails to prolong ceasefire in Yemen

12 May marked the start of a five-day ceasefire in the Saudi-backed bombing campaign in Yemen. Although the truce partially managed to lessen the sufferings of the civilian population, the conditions for starting peace negotiations remain unfavourable.

Officially known as Ansar Allah (Supporters of God), the Shiite Houthi rebels seized the Yemeni capital Sanaa in September and forced President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to resign on 21 January. After Hadi withdrew his resignation in February, he fled Yemen on 25 March and a day later, the Saudi-backed coalition began their airstrikes against the Iranian-supported Houthis.

The ceasefire in May came as a much-needed response to the humanitarian crisis in the country. The airstrikes resulted in the death of 1,600 people, with 6,200 citizens injured and the Saudi sea and air blockade made it impossible for aid teams to reach Yemen. The five-day pause enabled humanitarian agencies to enter the country, distributing food, water, medicine and fuel to the 12 million civilians left without supplies. Despite the success of certain missions (the International



Flag showing disapproval of the Saudi Arabian military intervention.
Picture: Wikimedia Commons

Committee for the Red Cross managed to send medical supplies to 700 patients), Oxfam claimed that five days was not enough time to reach the isolated parts of the country, with fuel supplies at extremely low levels. The World Food Programme also stated that at least 200,000 litres of fuel would be required to be able to continue the distribution of supplies.

Due to the severity of the situation, the United Nations made efforts to prolong the truce. UN Envoy to Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed called for an extension of at least five days, emphasising the need to alleviate the sufferings of the civilian population. Despite his appeal, fights resumed after the truce expired on 17 May.





Yemeni soldiers. Photo: Al Jazeera English

According to Riad Yassin, Yemen's Foreign Minister, the Houthis violated the terms of the ceasefire. The rebels also firmly rejected the return of President Hadi to power and were boycotting the talks; in these conditions, the Yemeni government stated they would not consider another pause in the fights.

At the end of May, the prospect of finding a durable way to end the conflict was not promising. Despite United States Secretary of State John Kerry claiming that the ceasefire "is not peace" and the fighting

parties need to find a political solution, the peace talks scheduled to take place in Geneva on the 28th of May were postponed. Sultan Al-Atwani, an aide to President Hadi, told Reuters that Houthi attacks on Southern cities were the reason of the postponement, as they showed that the rebels were unwilling to implement the UN Security Council resolution (calling for Houthis to withdraw from Yemen's main cities, among other demands). Without a peace treaty, there is no long-term hope to end the war.



Lockheed C-130H Hercules of Saudi Arabia's Air Force. Photo: Dale Coleman

“The rebels firmly rejected the return of President Hadi to power and were boycotting the talks. In these conditions, the Yemeni government stated they would not consider another pause in the fights”



Libya: conflicts at international and national levels

Divided by the fight between the rival governments of Tobruk and Tripoli, Libya faces aggression from international actors targeting both of its entities. The civil war gave rise to groups of the Islamic State in



Libyan Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni. Photo: US Department of State

the country, whose attacks have become more frequent, while the internationally recognised Tobruk-based government's relations with Turkey have deteriorated after their bombing of a Turkish ship.

The country's division can be traced back to the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011; Libya currently has three main power blocks. The Tripoli-based government, led by Khalifa al-Ghawi, is allied with military group Libya Dawn, while Operation Dignity answers to internationally recognised Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni's government in Tobruk. The jihadist groups include the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and Ansar al-Sharia; these formations took advantage of the conflict between the two parties and gained ground in the turmoil.

The beginning of the month saw the hardening of relations between Turkey and al-Thinni's government, after a Turkish cargo ship was shelled at the Libyan coast. The third officer of vessel Tuna-1 died and other crew members were injured. According to Mohamed Hejazi, a spokesperson for Libya's military, the ship had been warned not to approach the city of Derna before it was shelled 10 miles from

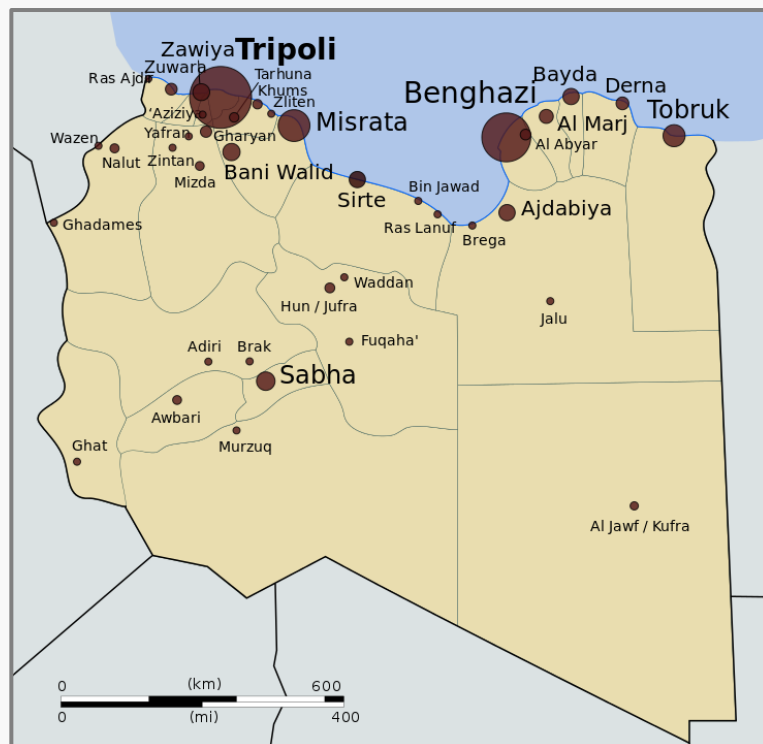


its port. Derna is under the control of militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the attack on Tuna-1 highlights the Tobruk government's assumption that the vessel was smuggling arms to the terrorists. The Turkish Foreign Ministry's account of the events differs significantly from the Libyan sources. They claim that the ship was 13 miles off the coast of Tobruk, still in international waters and was carrying gypsum from Spain to Tobruk. The Turkish Foreign Ministry condemned the attack as "barbaric" and "heinous", along with President Erdogan, who also said that Turkey's response would have been harsher, had the ship sailed under a Turkish flag.

The officially recognised government had to face attacks on Libyan soil as well. Benghazi, the country's second-largest city has been stricken by war between

Operation Dignity and Islamist forces for a year. On the 1st of May, three people died in a rocket attack on Benghazi medical centre and seven others were wounded; the perpetrators remain unknown. On the 29th, eight people were killed and eight others injured in another attack on the city, for which the Tripoli government was made responsible.

Khalifa al-Ghawi's administration was the target of Islamist aggression too. It called for a general mobilisation against the Islamic State after a car suicide bomber committed an attack near Misrata. Five fighters were killed, seven others wounded. The same day, on 31 May, the IS declared war against Libya Dawn, having also gained control over an airbase in oil-rich Sirte. The presence of unguarded oil is key in IS' power in Libya, providing the group with lucrative profits.



Main locations of the Libya uprising. Map: Wikimedia Commons



Violence is on the rise in Nigeria

The name of Boko Haram is known as a synonym of terror, massacre, abductions, execution, rapes and other crimes in Nigeria and Western Africa. It can be clearly seen that the group always takes a place on the reportages, articles, and other special programs recently.

Boko Haram – as an illegal organisation – was created in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf.

sensitive to the declaration of the Boko Haram. Indeed, sharia is recognized as the law in Nigeria since 2000.

In the country, 75% of the population is living under poverty rate, health services are minimal and education is catastrophic. 83% of young people are illiterate and almost the half of the school-age children does not go to school. Boko Haram

“In the country, 75% of the population is living under poverty rate, health services are minimal and education is catastrophic”

It occurred from some jihadist groups which called themselves “Boko Haram”.

It declared its first aim of denouncing the corruption of the Nigerian government and the inequalities in the country. Its declaration speech has an effect on many people in a country where 60% of the population lives with less than 2\$ per day.

In Borno, a city where people live in conditions worse than the rest of the country. The population of Borno is very

gathered its supporters slowly, was spreading their message and intensifying their actions until provoking an uprising in 2009, until the leader of the group was killed. It is now being led by Abubakar Shekau. The organization is composed of about 10,000 soldiers; some sources say this number fluctuates between 5,000 and 50,000. One of the other purposes of this organisation is to demolish the Western education system in the country. It uses as





Children at school in Nigeria. Photo: Dolapo Falola

a slogan: “Western education is a sin”. Because of its anti-occidental ideology, the Western World is against it and is taking some sanctions. For instance; Amnesty International, the international organization condemned the last big slaughter that happened in January 2015.

In four days, while the world was in turmoil because of the Charlie Hebdo’s murders in Paris, Boko Haram killed more than 2,000 people and destroyed an entire village. Last year Boko Haram was on every newspaper and social network because of the “bring back our girls” movement, which happened after the abduction of 200 high school student girls.

The last actions made by the group are less “spectacular” but more and more numerous like the murder of 43 peoples in Borno in Nigeria. This region is particularly sensitive to Boko Haram’s actions as it is the most frequently attacked by the group. In the capital Maiduguri which underwent 4 attacks in two days in the late of May 2015. Bombs explosion in market had 4 people injured. A suicide case got 26 persons killed and injured 28 others in a mosque of the same city. Moreover, Boko Haram’s actions are not restrained in Nigeria. The group is

also operating in Niger, Cameroon and Chad although the attacks are less frequent. On 5 and 6 May 2015 they attacked a village, Koukodou in Niger, near the Nigerian border, this resulted to the killing of five people and the burning their houses and two vehicles in the streets. To respond to these attacks, the opposition started to organise itself, and a coalition composed of soldiers from Niger, Chad, Nigeria and Cameroun has been created. All these acts of violence are giving an international exposure to Nigeria; this image, spread into the world can once again impact the economy of the country, other governments and companies feel uncertain about the security in Nigeria. As a result, more investors are becoming less willing to invest in the country which can impact the economy negatively. Boko Haram is now controlling a territory of the size of Belgium and is seeing an aim to create a “caliphate” where a strict application of the sharia law would be implemented. Nigeria’s new president, Buhari claimed in his inauguration speech that one of his priorities would be to fight Boko Haram which killed at least 3,600 people since the beginning of the insurrection in 2009.



Self-defense forces against Boko Haram. Photo: VOA

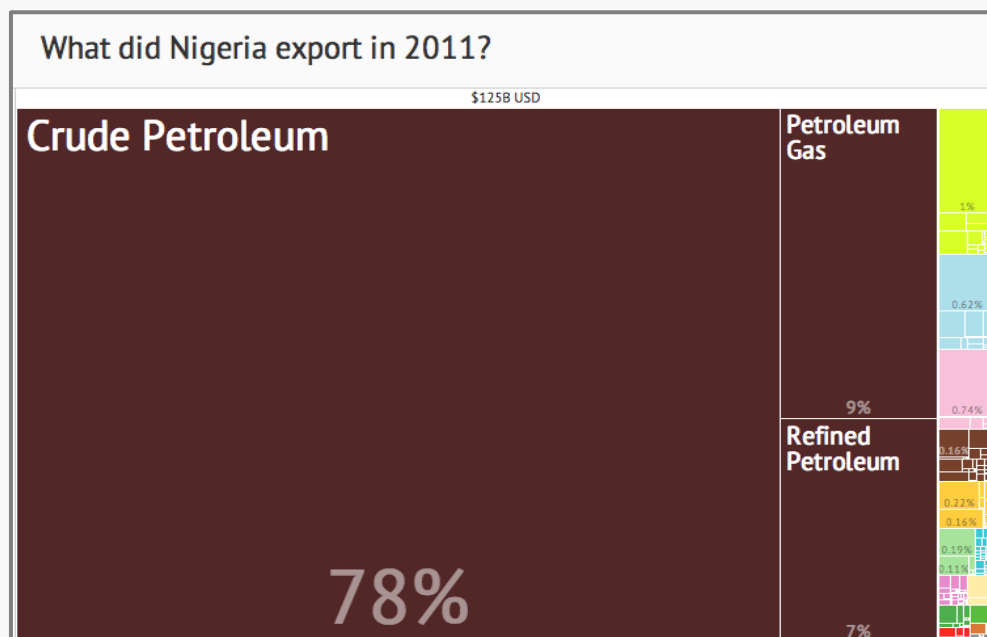


Nigeria: a triple issue

At the present time, the situation of Nigeria is critical in terms of politics, economics and social affairs. The country is faced with several challenges such as corruption, political instability, oil shortage, ailing and unsteady economy, The Boko Haram rebellion, civil war and terrorism. Therefore, the public good of the country is damaged.

As it is known, Nigeria is one of the richest countries in Africa with a GDP of 521.8 billion USD in 2013. Oil contributes a big

share of this wealth. It is the main and the first economic resource which represents 95% of the state revenue made on exports. However, most of the people believe this amount is not being used properly. They challenged the Nigerian Government's economic policies. The common idea is that instead of being used for the common good, public money goes down the drain. The last scandal in mind is the misappropriation of oil income of the company that amounts to almost 50 billion



Nigeria's export products. Chart: Atlas of Economic Complexity



dollars. But according to the accounting activities made by the central bank, it is expressed that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has never reached to this amount. Moreover, when the governor of the Central Bank denounced it (with an underestimation of 12 billions of dollars certainly caused by political pressures), former president Goodluck simply dismissed him from his post. Same thing is for the Excess Crude Account (ECA) which registered a hole of almost 10 billion dollars in 2013. What happened to this money? Goodluck's opponents think that he used this money to finance his re-election campaign. Truth be told, these are just some examples of the corruption that is affecting the country which ranked 130 among 180 countries in terms of corruption.

What could have been done with this amount of money? This money could have served the people who live in the lower standards of living according to the rest of the people in the country. It could have been used for the poor people who live under the poverty line. In 2009, the number of people who was under the poverty line decreased from more than 60% to about 33%. But it still represents 58 millions of

inhabitants over 173.6 million. And half of them are located in the North. Moreover, 70% of the population, almost 120 millions of people, are living with less than 2 dollars per day when the GDP per capita (which is an average number) is supposed to be around 3,000 USD.

The corruption and bribery can be seen everywhere in Nigeria. It takes place in every field and in different shapes, from the simple benefits to the misuse of tax revenue, or even the elections rigging.

All of these forms of corruption have negative effects not only on the economy of Nigeria but also on the lives of Nigerians. One instance where in poor are in disadvantaged is the merit system in terms of the acceptance for a good job. The talented students can be eliminated by the students who have a rich family.

This is a result of the collapse of the merit system. All the little briberies can also be costly to the government. Like for instance, lost tax revenue deters the chance have to build infrastructures for education, health, public transport etc. This situation affects all the sectors of the economy as the workers may get less competent than the others. Muhammed Buhari has been criticising this situation since the election in March 2015.

“All of these forms of corruption have negative effects not only on the economy of Nigeria but also on the lives of Nigerians”



Violent protests sparked in Burundi

The peaceful years are far away from the contemporary situation of Burundi, a country that risks getting involved in a new crisis. The chronology of the events led to current instability starts on 25 April 2015, when Pierre Nkurunziza decided to



Pierre Nkurunziza in 2008. Photo: World Economic Forum

candidate himself at the elections of 26 June for a third term. The public responded immediately when many groups of citizens began to demonstrate against his candidacy, defining it as unconstitutional. Soon after the terror started in Bujumbura, the capital when protesters fought against the police and several people were wounded in a grenade attack. The local residents said that the grenade attack was followed by gunfire in which a police officer died and another was wounded. While the president, Pierre Nkurunzika was abroad, General Godefroid Niyombare announced the dismissal of the Burundian President and the end of his government. At that time, people began to feel free from another candidacy of Nkurunziza and many were celebrating on the streets. That moment did not last for long and according to the local media, the coup d'état made by the General has failed, but he was not arrested. Right now, in the streets of Bujumbura the army is mingled with rival factions which still want to fight the police and protest against the President.

Gordien Niyungeko, deputy head of Focode, one of the 300 civil society groups, said: "Protests to reject the third term bid for

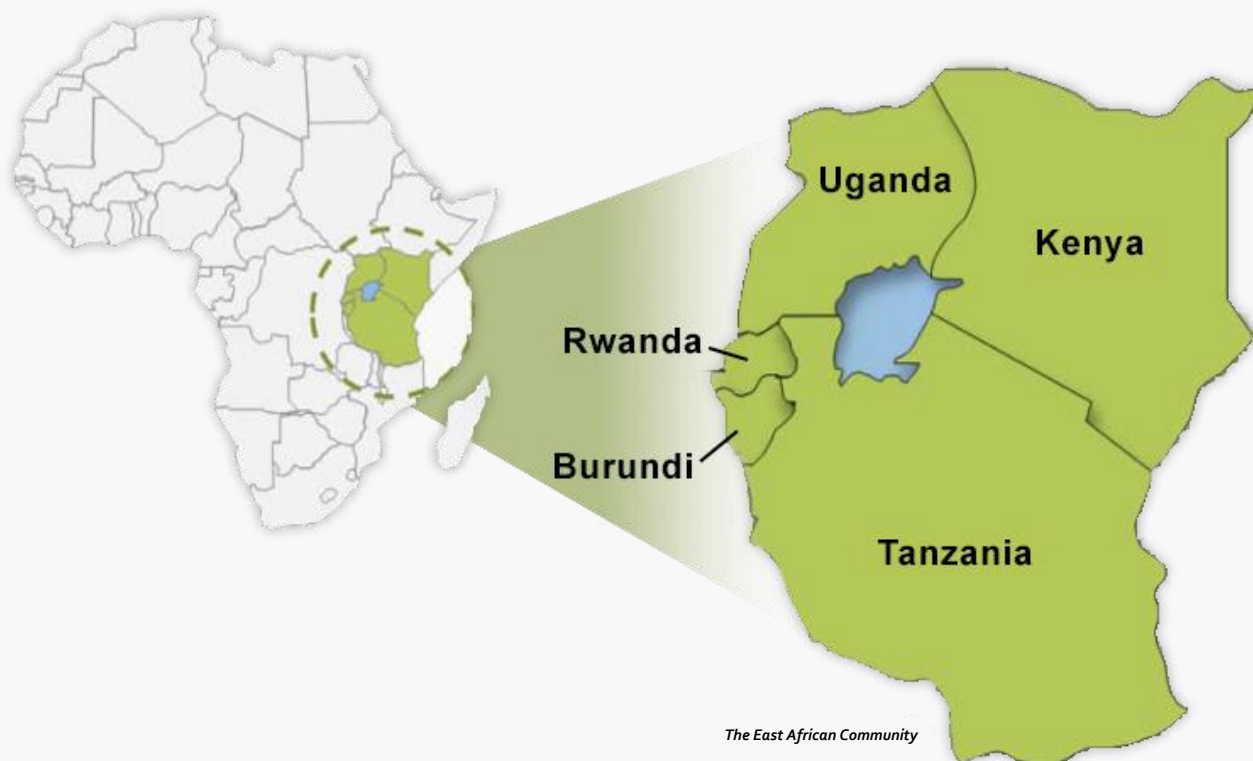


Nkurunziza will continue". Seen this dangerous situation and the frequent noise of arms, many people are escaping to Tanzania or Rwanda, to seek peace. The police attacks have mobilised the opinion of the Western donors and the United States, who demanded a halt to violence. On 23 May, Zedi Feruzi, leader of Burundi's opposition party Union for Peace and Development was killed in a drive-by shooting in Bujumbura. Agathon Rwaswa, head of the opposite faction, said that there was no information on who had killed Feruzi.

Adama Dieng, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, met President Nkurunziza and emphasised the importance of respect human rights and called for creating of an open dialogue between the parties. More than 20 people

died in protests, since Nkurunziza gave the announcement of his candidacy.

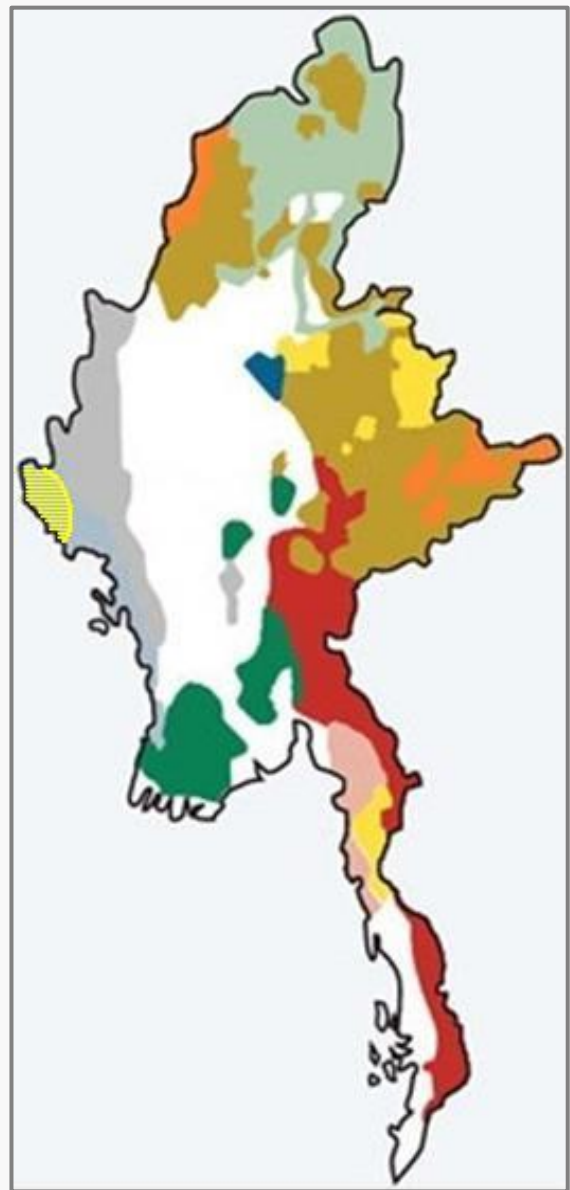
On 31 May a summit of Heads of States of the East African Community (EAC) was organised in Dar es Salaam, the most important city of Tanzania in order to find solution for the Burundi crisis, which resulted the death of many people, influx of refugees to the neighbouring countries, destruction of property and paralyzing business in some parts of Burundi. The summit decided to postpone the elections for a period not less than one and a half months and called for the urgent disarmament of all armed youth groups allied to political parties. The East African Community expressed its solidarity with Burundian people and decided to help them according to the African Union, the United Nations and all other partners.



Rohingya refugee crisis

In what considered to be the worst humanitarian crisis in Southeast Asia in the recent years, tens of thousands of Rohingya people from Bangladesh and Myanmar have fled from poverty and persecution to other Southeast Asian countries, only to be stranded at sea for days on end without food, water and shelter. Up to 200 people might have died during the journey, while many are reportedly in critical physical state.

Countries where the Rohingya “boat people” were heading towards to including Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, reacted at first by turning them away. Quoted by the Guardian, Malaysian deputy home minister Wan Junaidi Jafaar said, “What do you expect us to do? We have been very nice to the people who broke into our border. We have treated them humanely but they cannot be flooding our shores like this.” Meanwhile, Thai Prime Minister Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha bluntly commented that his country could not afford to host the refugees. The Southeast Asian countries have received heavy criticism for their failure to rescue the Rohingya people, and in response, Malaysia and Indonesia pledged to



Rohingya people in Myanmar (yellow striped section). Map: Wikimedia Commons





Rohingya nationality flag. Picture: Wikimedia Commons

temporarily take in the refugees on condition that they can be repatriated and relocated within a year.

So who are the Rohingya boat people and why no country wants them?

Once ruled by a military junta, Myanmar had its first democratic election in 2011, along with various political reforms. Yet democratic changes have yet to come, when a vast number of ethnic minority groups in Myanmar have continued to be under constant public discrimination and institutionalized oppression. Bordering China, Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh and India, Myanmar is assumed to be ethnically diverse. Yet in a country with nearly 90% of the population being Buddhist, around 1.3 million Rohingya people, a long-persecuted Muslim minority from the Rakhine state in the western coast of Myanmar, are still facing ethnic cleansing. Under the 1982 Citizenship Law, the Rohingya people are denied Burmese citizenship on discriminatory ethnic grounds, despite the fact that their families have been living there for generations.

Violence erupted between the Rohingya and Burmese Buddhist nationalists in 2012, after a Rakhine Buddhist woman was gang raped and murdered, and ten Rohingya Muslims were accused to be the culprits

behind the crime. The incident fuelled sectarian conflict between the two ethnic groups, the Buddhist natives to Rakhine, then Arakan state, and the Rohingya Muslims. Backed by the Burmese government, the security forces and community leaders, in the 2012 June and October riots, Buddhist extremists jointly conducted attacks targeting Muslims and their neighbourhoods, resulting in hundreds of deaths, and thousands of Rohingya homes being burned to the ground, forcing more than 140,000 to be displaced to open-air camps. The local authorities were complicit and engaging in the collective isolation of the Muslim population, thus failed to prevent the violence perpetrated against them.

The Rohingya have, since then, been considered stateless, and they have suffered from marginalization, along with various physical abuses, lack of food, education, proper medical care, freedom to travel and other basic human rights. In 2014, the Rohingya people were excluded from the country's first nationwide census in 30 years. The United Nations has called the



Cox's Bazaar Refugee Camp, Bangladesh. Photo: Foreign and Commonwealth Office



Rohingya Muslims the most persecuted community in the world, as they are treated with contempt by not only Myanmar but also other neighbouring countries, even Muslim-majority Malaysia and Indonesia. While they are often mistakenly seen as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh by the Myanmar government, neither of these nations, however, are willing to recognize them, as Bangladeshi authorities also refer to them as a “burden” to the already impoverished and populated country.

Tensions arising in Myanmar have led to a mass exodus of Rohingya recently. It is estimated that during the past three years, more than 120,000 Rohingya have escaped Myanmar, many of whom have fallen victims to human traffickers, who put them in transit camps in Thailand where they had to live in dire conditions and

suffered from rampant torture, exploitation and starvation. Migrants were held captive until their families paid huge ransoms to the traffickers, as survivors recapped how those without money were often sold off as modern-day slaves or killed without mercy. At the beginning of May, dozens of mass graves of Rohingya immigrants were discovered in Thailand's mountainous areas, near the border with Malaysia, prompting pressure on the Thai government to take stronger actions to end trafficking and the local authorities' complicity with the traffickers in the ordeal.

International media has condemned Myanmar's systematic persecution of the Rohingya Muslims as genocidal actions and crime against humanity, while Burmese Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, a devout Buddhist, has remained obscurely silent on the issue.



Displaced Rohingya people in Rakhine State. Photo: Foreign and Commonwealth Office



Tensions continue over disputed islands on the South China Sea



Islands of the South China Sea. Map: Wikimedia Commons

Dispute over territory claims and sovereignty over ocean areas has been going on for centuries between rival countries in the South China Sea. But recent upsurge in tension may spark a bigger concern for the area and may very well lead to global consequences.

The dispute in question are the two chain of islands, called the Paracels and the Spratlys. Alongside the islands there are many sandbanks and reefs. The Spratly islands are disputed between China,

Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines. All these countries have overlapping claims on parts of the island chain if not all. The Paracel islands however are disputed between countries such as China, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Although largely uninhabited, the Paracels and the Spratlys believed have reserves of natural resources around them. There has been little detailed exploration of the area, so estimations are there are big reserves of oil and gas around the area. Also the sea is also a major shipping route of world trade and home to fishing grounds that supply the people across the region.

As the tensions escalate new crises are happening, such as the China Navy warning US surveillance planes crossing the area. It appears that China's claims are staying not only at claims and evolving in to an action in order to strengthen the Chinese position. Reports from the US officials are towards exposing China's current plans and actions on the Islands. China is building man-made islands on the Spratlys to make future bases for the Chinese Navy and its operations. It is stated that China is even placing artillery weapons on this newly constructed islands.



Comments from US officials and Washington's allies in the region are suggesting that this actions will further raise the tensions and undermine the security of the region.

One of the US allies in the region, Taiwan proposes a South China Sea Peace Plan to avert a possibly major conflict. The initiative, announced by the president, Ma Ying-jeou, called on claimants to temporarily shelve their disagreements to enable negotiations on sharing resources. Ma's plan is similar to a 2012 proposal for the East China Sea, which allowed Taiwan and Japan to jointly fish in the contested

of exercise was referring to "improve tactical expertise in amphibian operations and to strengthen Japan-US interoperability".

In return to this, it is announced that Russia will take part in naval military exercises together with its Asia Pacific allies, namely China, according to the Russian deputy defense minister. Anatoly Antonov announced Russia's planned participation in the May 2016 drills which have a focus on counter-terrorism and naval security. He also commented he was concerned about stability in the region, naming the US as the main destabilizing factor. He made a

“The United States and its allies are trying to pressure China to stop building artificial islands in the disputed areas”

waters. But it appears unlikely that China will accept such a plan as it has rebuffed previous multilateral peace negotiations.

Meanwhile another major US ally in East Asia, Japan will participate in Australia-US Talisman Sabre military drill for the first time. As a major military exercise, Washinton wants to strengthen the links between its allies against an increasingly assertive China in Asia. A Japanese spokesman commented that they will participate in joint exercises with the US Marines rather than operating directly with the Australian military, but it is seen as a bolstering the defence ties between Japan and Australia. A Japanese army statement about the aim

remark that Washington's policies have been aimed against Russia and China: "We are concerned by US policies in the region, especially since every day it becomes increasingly focused on a systemic containment of Russia and China. Despite our concerns about the US global missile defense architecture, they continue a policy of disrupting strategic stability, adding a regional segment of an anti-missile 'shield' in the Asia-Pacific." This exercise will take place in South China Sea in May 2016 when the united States and its allies are trying to pressure China to stop building artificial islands in the disputed areas.



North Korea Tests Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile

North Korea carried out a successful missile test launched from an underwater submarine. Reported by the North Korean news agency, Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Kim Jong-un personally oversaw the testing. According to the news agency, missile launch test from a submarine made from a faraway location from the North Korean mainland. Kim Jong-un praised the missile test as a “miraculous achievement” and commented his country is capable of producing further missiles like this.

Although US Military officials believe this underwater missile test is a fraud and North Korea is many years away from that technology, the US State Department without going into much detail commented: “launches using ballistic missile technology are a clear violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions.” Ban Ki-moon deplored the cancellation as “deeply regrettable”.

After the test-fired submarine-launched ballistic missile, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged North Korea to avoid any actions that might escalate military tensions. This comment however resulted in a cancellation of an expected visit from

Ban to an industrial zone inside North Korea.

As North Korea is known to allocate a very significant portion of its budget to military this news maybe sooner than expected but “everyone knew they had been working on this”, commented Daniel Pinkston, deputy



Painted portrait of Kim Jong Un. Picture: Thierry Ehrmann



project director for North East Asia at the International Crisis Group in an interview with CNN. Pinkston continued, "If they can deploy an operational submarine that could launch ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads, it would give them a pretty credible second strike capability, and it's difficult to defend against. So it would give them the kind of deterrent that they have said they wish to have". According to analysts like Pinkston, defending against nuclear missiles fired from submarines are much harder.

What is more to this, again reported by the KCNA, Korean Military officials claimed they have had the capacity of miniaturising

nuclear warheads for some time now. Official US response for this was scepticism. "Our assessment of North Korea's nuclear capabilities has not changed", National Security Council spokesman Patrick Ventrell said in a statement. "We do not think that they have that capacity." Despite this scepticism many senior US military officials suspects advancement in North Korean nuclear program, as miniaturising a nuclear warhead is one of the key parts nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missile.

The apparent progress of the North Korean regime's nuclear weapons program is threatening to upend the United States' strategic calculations in the region. North Korea has demanded that the United States recognize it as a nuclear power. But Washington has commented that North Korea's commitment to denuclearisation is the starting point for any negotiations between the two sides. North Korea is the subject to the UN Security Council sanctions because of its nuclear tests, but the international measures do not appear to have stopped North Korea from continuing to develop its nuclear weapon programs, which it says it needs as a deterrent to the threat it perceives from the United States.

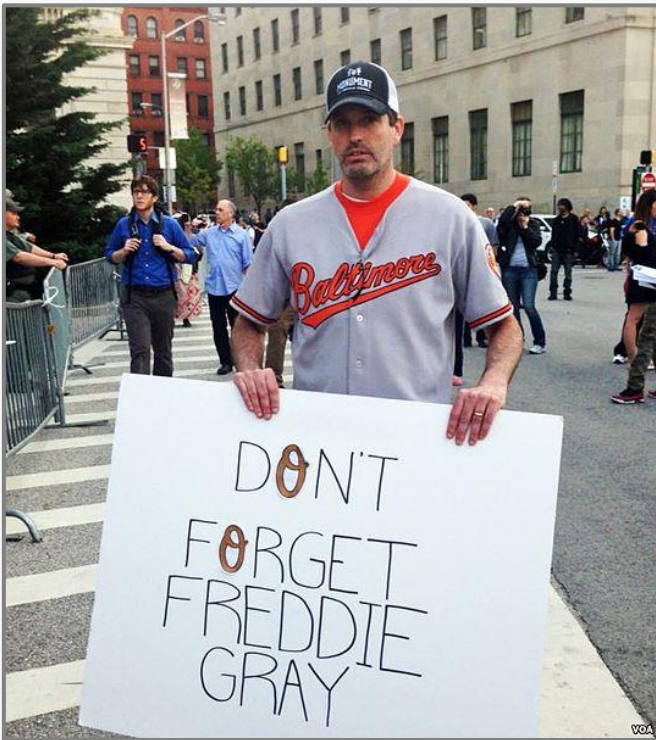
Not only United States but also its close allies in the region are affected by the developing nuclear threats as it is likely to undermine regional stability. To discuss this nuclear threat, envoys from South Korea, the US, and Japan met in Seoul on 27 May and agreed on the need to increase pressure on North Korea and urged the country to engage in serious negotiations on its expanding nuclear weapons program.



North Korea's Unha-3 rocket. Photo: VOA



Police brutality in the United States



A demonstrator in Baltimore. Photo: VOA

As of May 2015, the number of fatal police shootings within the United States has reached 467, in compared to 1,149 deaths last year. According a Guardian analysis, unarmed black Americans are twice likely to be killed by the police than white Americans – a rather disproportionate number considering black Americans make up only 13% of the population. One of the highlights in the second quarter

of the year was the death of 25-year-old Freddie Gray, who died with a broken neck and a spinal injury a week after being apprehended by the police. Forensic examination shows that Gray's injuries were inflicted while being transported in the police van, as footage video also reveals how he was chased down and eventually handcuffed for “illegally” possessing a knife in his pocket. A criminal inquiry was opened into the arrest, which found that Gray was unreasonably detained and six police officers involved were suspended by court rulings.

This incident however, sparked a wave of outrage in the West side of Baltimore. Thousands of protestors came down to the streets to express frustration over the injustice and the police brutality, calling for legal prosecutions against the police officers responsible for the death of Freddie Gray. The peaceful demonstrations turned violent when clashes broke down between the protestors and the police in riot gear, and as hundreds of people were arrested and injured, a state of emergency was declared across Baltimore.

In light of a number of uprisings nationwide, US President Barack Obama has proposed



a number of reforms concerning the end of lethal force by the police, especially against the minority groups. The question of changes, however, remains difficult to solve. The story of Baltimore, as well as many stories behind a number of protests occupying the US in the past few years, had already begun a long time ago. Before a death and the unrest, there were inequality and racial discrimination, poverty and unemployment, gentrification and displacement, that the death of Freddie Gray, after all, only added fuel to the fire. Baltimore is one of the poorest cities in the

US, and with the unemployment rate continuing to soar up amid the economic crisis, more than one thirds of the neighbourhood still live in poverty, going in parallel with the mass incarceration rate and urban renewal in the area. It is no coincidence that 97% of the population is black, which certainly reflects underlying problems in the policies towards this group. The unrest in Baltimore, thus, is not just a rage against the police abuse of power on the community, but also against the systematic structure that is deeply rooted in racial segregation and discrimination.

“The death of Freddie Gray,
after all, only added fuel to the fire”



Minneapolis rally to support the people of Baltimore. Photo: Fibonacci Blue



■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Terrorist attack hit Kumanovo, Macedonia

■ On 9 May in Kumanovo, North of Macedonia, several explosions were accompanied by firefights and between the local police and a foreign terrorist group. The street-to-street fighting forced many families to flee the city and seeking refuge in Likova. According to Ivo Kotevski, ministry spokesman, this group was already infiltrated in the city to make different attacks. The National Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attack, but the Macedonian Interior Ministry said that only a planned operation could stop them. The police has started entering homes searching for the terrorists. According to police reports, five police officers killed and over thirty wounded. Just in Kumanovo, the same date, on 9 June 1999, the peace treaty was signed to put end on the Kosovo war. Right now, the city is the theatre of attacks and violence. Many protesters in the streets are against the Government of Nicola Gruevski, leader of VMRO, particularly after the death of Martins Neshkovski, killed by the police after the post-electoral celebration on the last 2011.

“The police has started entering homes searching for the terrorists”

Taliban suicide attack near Kabul airport

■ A few hundred metres from Kabul's international airport, a Taliban suicide bomber attacked a European convoy in mission there. Three people were killed including a British citizen, innocent women, men and children were wounded who witnessed the tragic scene. A Taliban spokesman announced to international media that the bomber targeted a convoy of foreign invader forces. Some days earlier in Kabul, 14 people were killed, many foreigners between them. These attacks are actions of a long series of events that Afghan security forces must repress, since NATO and US troops ended their combat mission last year. The Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said: “The killing of innocent women and children shows the terrorists have been defeated on the battlefield and are looking for alternative means of killing innocent people”.



Bus attack in Karachi

■ Karachi, Pakistan's biggest town has been victim of a bus attack on 13 May 2015. A group of gunmen on motorcycles attacked a bus filled of Ismailis, a Shia minority, causing 43 deaths and injuring 13 people. The origin of the attack has been claimed by Jundullah, a Sunnite organization based in Iran. The security of the bus had been reinforced months ago after the group received some threats. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has condemned the attack, as it was not the first one made by Jundullah this year.

Afghanistan: Taliban raid police compound

■ Taliban militants took over Naw Zad compound in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan, after killing 19 officers and seven soldiers. Fighting between the Taliban and the officers went on for hours before the insurgents successfully captured three army checkpoints, putting the police headquarters under siege. Just a few days earlier, a roadside bomb killed two in Uruzgan province, including a district chief and his body guard. Although Taliban militants have yet to claim responsibility for the attack but they are known to have often used roadside bombs against Afghan officials and security forces. Taliban attacks across the country have heightened following the withdrawal of foreign troops last year, prompting Government forces to launch operations against them in March.

Al-Shabaab militants kill lawmaker in Mogadishu

■ The al-Qaeda-linked insurgents said that they were behind the attack that killed a regional lawmaker in the capital, as clashes with police troops in two southern Somali towns claimed the lives of at least 24 people. Although they were driven out of Mogadishu in 2011, al-Shabaab continues to pose major threats to the Somali government and the East African region in general, with frequent hit-and-runs in many Somali cities and across the border with Kenya. In one of its deadliest strikes in Kenya last April, al-Shabaab stormed Garissa University College and killed 148, most of whom are students.

Defeat to Obama trade agenda

■ Senate Democrats voted to prevent the chamber from tackling fast-track legislation on 5 May 2015. This has become a huge loss for the Obama administration, as they have spent weeks on lobbying the project. Fast-track was opposed significantly by the Democrats led by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid and Senator Elizabeth Warren. An even stronger opposition from the Democratic senators in the House and the loss may be a signal for the end of accomplishing Obama's top priorities. Senate Democrats demanded that the fast-track bill would be combined with a customs bill that would address currency manipulation, and two other pieces of economic legislation. This division in the ranks of the Democratic Party and White House's defeat have created large tensions in the American Senate, and the outcomes are yet to be seen.



■ News in Brief

Bilateral relations

Antigua and Barbuda recognizes the independence of Kosovo

■ On 20 May, the Caribbean state of Antigua and Barbuda recognized the independence of Kosovo. There has been a long negotiation progress between the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia to reach peace and stability. Numerous meetings have been taken place between Deputy Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi and former Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Winston Baldwin Spencer. Right now the news was confirmed with a verbal note from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Charles Fernandez: Kosovo is independent. According to the statement, Kosovo is working hard to build a democratic society based on peace, justice and respect of human rights.



Kosovo in the Balkans. Map: Wikimedia Commons



Flag of Kosovo. Picture: Wikimedia Commons

Burkina Faso and Niger exchange 18 towns

■ A long-lasting border dispute between Burkina Faso and Niger is finally being resolved with the exchange of eighteen towns between them. 14 towns now will become a part of Burkina Faso, while Niger will receive four until the end of next year. This agreement is an implementation of the International Court of Justice decision, which was issued back in 2013. After the exchange of territory is complete, the locals of the affected territories will have a five-year period to choose whether they want to change their nationality, or hold to the initial one. Most of the borders of the region were drawn by European colonists long time in past, and now the ex-colonies finally settle some of their disputes. This particular decision may not be the last one for Burkina Faso, which still needs to demarcate about one third of its boundaries with Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Togo.



Russian aircraft head off us destroyer in Black Sea

■ The conflict of interests between Russia and the West has taken a new turn, as the Russian Air Force in the Crimean peninsula had to head off a US warship, which was moving along Russian territorial waters. The Russian information agency stated afterwards, that the warship crew was acting aggressively and provocatively, which concerned the military situated in Crimea. A Su-24 jet fighter was sent to demonstrate that any border violation would be harshly prevented. This episode took place after a series of incidents when Swedish and British fighters had to intercept Russian Bombers near their borders, and the United States had a conflict with a Russian fighter intercepting a reconnaissance plane in the international airspace over the Baltic Sea.

“A Su-24 jet fighter was sent to demonstrate that any border violation would be harshly prevented”

China warns US surveillance plane

■ Tensions in the South China Sea escalated as Chinese Navy warned a US Surveillance plane had flown over the disputed Spratly Islands. Building of man-made islands in the area and increasing Chinese military have alarmed Pentagon. The P8-A Poseidon surveillance aircraft received not only one but eight warnings from the Chinese Navy while swooping around the islands. Reporters have given exclusive permission to board the surveillance flight because the US wants to raise awareness of China's island building project.

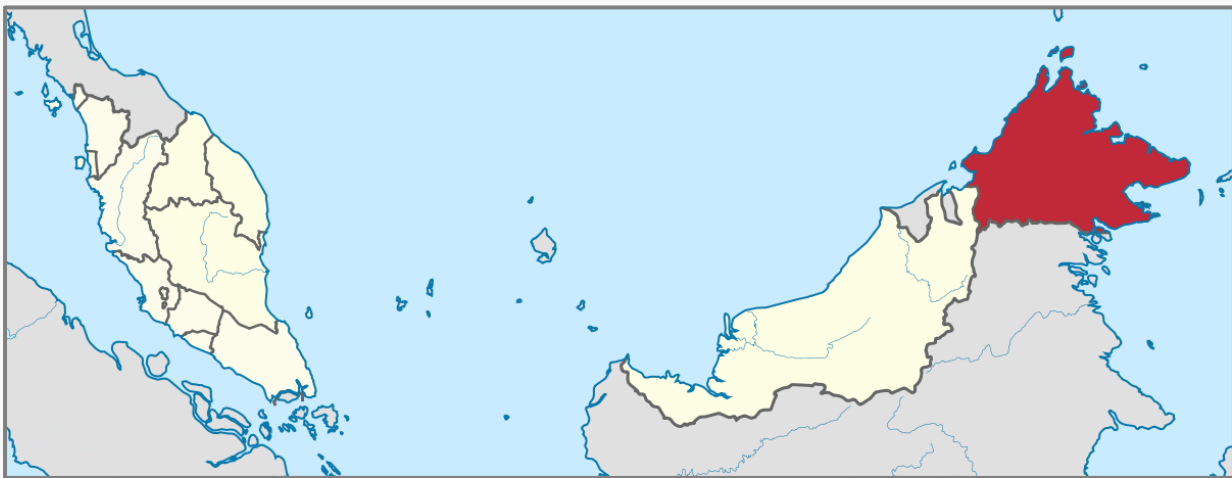
Vietnam and US to deepen military cooperation

■ Following his recent address in the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore on the South China Sea tension, US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter paid a visit to Vietnam on 1 June 2015 for talks on enhancing the defence relationship between the two countries. The new vision statement, which was based on an earlier 2011 accord, includes more frequent US surveillance on the South China Sea and financial aids for military supplies such as high-tech submarines and patrol boats. Such cooperation between the two former wartime adversaries has been made possible since United States' increasing interest in the Asia-Pacific region and China's escalating actions in the disputed sea zones.



Malaysia summons Philippine diplomat over Sabah

■ Malaysia has summoned Philippine Charge d'Affaires Medardo Macaraig on 19 May over recent remarks made by Philippine President Benigno S. Aquino III on the Philippines' claim on Sabah. Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman explained that the United Nations has considered Sabah a part of Malaysia since 16 September 1963. Anifah said, "the government of Malaysia reiterates its position that Malaysia does not recognise and will not entertain any claims by any party on Sabah." As a resource rich area, Sabah was a part of Sulu Sultanate before colonialism. The state has joined the newly formed Federation of Malaysia in 1963.



Sabah in Malaysia. Map: Wikimedia Commons

Qatar extends travel bans on ex-Guantanamo prisoners

■ Qatar has agreed to extend the travel bans on the five former Guantanamo inmates who were released in exchange for the freedom of an American soldier held captive by the Taliban last year, provided that they remained under strict monitoring in Qatar for a year. The ban was to expire on 31 May 2015, as a result, negotiations between the US officials and the Qatari authorities were underway to temporarily prolong it for another six months. At least one among the released detainees was allegedly in contacts with other militants while in Qatar, which raises concerns that they would return to combats once officially freed.

“ [It] raises concerns that they would return to combats once officially freed ”



■ News in Brief

International relations

Tony Blair resigns as Middle East peace envoy

■ After eight years as envoy of the Middle East Quartet, the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced his resignation in a letter to Ban Ki-moon, and confirmed it in a communiqué made by his office. Nevertheless, according to closed sources, he should remain active without any official spot. His involvement, the work accomplished and his contribution to the Israeli-Palestinian peace during several years has been applauded by members of the quartet – United Nations, United States, the European Union and Russia – in a common statement and he was thanked by the Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the work done. However, his ideological opponents, the British group Stop the War Coalition regretted his designation in the first place and applauded not his work but his resignation to protest against the war of Iraq.

Gulf states in doubt about partnerships with the US

■ King Salman of Saudi Arabia made the last-minute decision to withdraw from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Camp David Summit with US President Barack Obama on 13 and 14 May 2015. Other Gulf countries including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman also sent deputies to attend in place of their leaders. This is a sign to express their disappointment with the latest US nuclear agreement with Iran, the rising opponent of the Gulf. GCC countries also cast doubts over the United States' recent lack of involvement in the Middle East, especially in the wars in Syria, Yemen and Iraq. On the other hand, the White House hesitates to take a further step towards a written defence treaty with the Gulf states, for fear of Israel's security in the region.





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