

„Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues“

Cultural Relations Policy

News and Background

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About CRP News & Background

Cultural Relations Policy News & Background is a part of ICRP Monthly Review Series and an initiative of Institute for Cultural Relations Policy Budapest. Launched in 2012, its mission is to provide information and analysis on key international political events. Each issue covers up-to-date events and analysis of current concerns of international relations on a monthly basis.

As an initiative of ICRP, the content of this magazine is written and edited by student authors. The project, as part of the Institute's Internship Programme provides the opportunity to strengthen professional skills.



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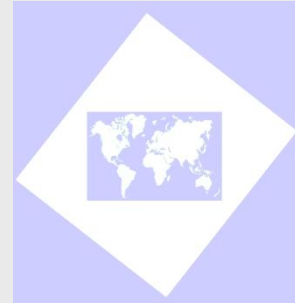
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Cuba Seeks for New Partnerships

On 4 July 2012 President of Cuba, Raul Castro visited Beijing to sign trade deals, and to get acquainted with the Chinese mixed economy. Raul Castro ever since and before taking over from his brother in 2008 had been speaking approvingly of the Chinese mix of socialism and market liberalisation, and China seems very eager to share its experiences with Cuba.

The pacts signed include a grant and interest-free loan to the government of Castro for economic and technological co-operation. According to the pacts Chinese government will support the Cuban health care and other public services too.



Washington's answer came one week after the meeting, however not officially. After 50 years of trade embargo Havana Bay has received a shipment of humanitarian aid from Miami. The shipment contained family goods, food, medicine and clothing, as well as medical equipment such as orthopaedic mattresses and electric wheelchairs. Shipper International Port Corp. hoped to make this a weekly service between the US and Cuba. Port Corp. said it has been granted a special permit from the US to begin trading despite the ideological differences between the countries. There was no official response from Cuba.

US President Barack Obama has slightly eased the embargo, dissolving some travel restrictions and allowing Cuban Americans to send unlimited transfers back home, what is a significant move as 80 per cent of the 1.5 million members of the Cuban diaspora live in the southern states of the United States of America.

Besides the re-energising Chinese and the new dawn of American cooperation visions, India's commerce and industry minister, Jyotiraditya Scindia, travelled to Cuba in July to "open new horizons" in bilateral economic cooperation.

New Chapter in Rwanda-DR Congo Relations

On April 1994 the world was terrified to become aware of the genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda. The Hutus possessed by the ideology that Tutsis intend to enslave Hutus, committed one of the biggest genocide during the history of human race.

This ideology was created in 1990, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel group composed mostly of Tutsi refugees, invaded northern Rwanda from Uganda in an attempt to defeat the Hutu-led government. They began the Rwandan Civil War, fought between the Hutu regime, with support from Francophone Africa and France, and the RPF, with support from Uganda. This exacerbated ethnic tensions in the country. In response, many Hutu gravitated toward the Hutu Power ideology, with the prompting of state-controlled and independent Rwandan media.

On June 1994 the Paul Kagame's Tutsi rebels take power in Rwanda, Hutus flee into Zaire (in the present Democratic Republic of Congo). More than two million Hutus are thought to have escaped to DR Congo fearing revenge against them by the new, Tutsi-dominated government. Among the refugees were many militiamen who were responsible for murdering more than 500,000 Tutsis.

They quickly allied themselves with Mobutu (president of Zaire from 24 November 1965 to 16 May 1997) and began to harass and often to attack the state's large size population of ethnic Tutsis, who had lived in the country for a long time.

But Rwanda's army entered Eastern Zaire to pursue Hutu fighters and they had to join battle with the government troops of Zaire too. The Tutsi militia of Rwanda eventually won, captured the capital, Kinshasa and expelled the government of Mobutu in 1997. The joint forces against Mobutu and his Hutu rebel allies were led by Laurent Kabila who later became the president of the country which was renamed Democratic Republic of Congo straight away. His military force was called Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL).

But Kabila could not expel the Hutu militia and for this reason Rwanda, which had helped him to be president, soon sent new forces to remove him. Kabila, the Tutsi president of DR Congo, then asked help from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola and for the next five years all six countries (Rwanda supported by Uganda), and others, fought a proxy war on Congolese land.

In 2003 the war officially ended but Hutu and Tutsi militias continue to clash in the Eastern part of DR Congo.

In 2008 Tutsi-led CNDP (National Congress for the Defence of the People) rebels marched on North Kivu capital, Goma for this reason 250,000 people fled. Kivu is one of the regions of DR Congo. CNDP is a political armed militia established by Laurent Nkunda in the Kivu region in December 2006.

Though after many years of war Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo agreed peace deal in 2009 and CNDP integrated into Congolese army, peace and the democratic political system were not sustained. Rwanda and DR Congo were about to recover from the 5 years long war when, in 2012, the CNDP led by Bosco Ntaganda, the "Terminator" triggered off a mutiny.

Bosco Ntaganda risen as the CNDP's new leader and managed its integration into regular army with the rank of general.

The Congolese government's protection of Gen. Ntaganda as part of the 2009 agreement became less and less tenable, especially after numerous UN and non-governmental organisations reports highlighted the extensive criminal networks he had established inside the army in the Eastern part of DR Congo.

During the first week of April, army commanders close to Gen. Ntaganda began to defect and move their troops to remote strongholds in North and South Kivu. He defected on April 2012 – three years after he led the integration. For this reason on 11 April, Mr Kabila (president of DR Congo) called for his arrest – however, he said he will not hand him over to the ICC (International Criminal Court). Simultaneously the government forces started to fight against the defectors loyal to the General.

While government forces managed to contain the mutiny in South Kivu and arrested 18 high-ranking officers due to be tried in the coming days, defectors in North Kivu regrouped in the Masisi area, where they began to clash with government forces.



By the end of the month, the confrontation had escalated into a full-scale war involving hundreds of soldiers.

Several security sources in Goma fear these new rebels may have found refuge and support in Rwanda, in a repeat of the Nkunda era. But the president of Rwanda Paul Kagame stated his country would stay neutral in this conflict.

Competition for land and natural resources remain, with CNDP and army defectors claiming to fight for the interests of Kinyarwanda-speaking citizens, especially Tutsis, some of whom live in fear after the 1994 genocide.

On July 2012 Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo have agreed to allow a neutral international force to patrol their borders, and to tackle the militias. This arrangement was made by the leaders of the countries during an African Union summit. They agreed to work with the African Union and the UN forces in establishing a neutral international force to eradicate armed militias in the Eastern part of the DR Congo.



Harsh Criticism on New Leader in Hong Kong

The surge of anti-China sentiment started in the beginning of year 2012 in Hong Kong, when a group of residents raised money online to fund an advert which depicting a giant locust overlooking Hong Kong's skyline as a striking representation of their disapproval of mainland visitors. The citizens of Hong Kong have a lot in common with the Chinese people of the mainland, but over the last 150 years their culture and everyday customs diverged.

After the return of Hong Kong, the “one country, two systems” policy was introduced. This broadly means that it is largely free to manage its own internal affairs, while Beijing determines foreign and defence policy.

Since the handover in 1997 the number of mainland visitors to Hong Kong has multiplied. Their main reason to visit is shopping, because of the lack of sales tax, so it is usually much cheaper to do shopping here. The other reason is giving birth, because if the child of a mainland family born in Hong Kong automatically receives the right to live and work there, as well as the right to carry a Hong Kong passport, which makes international travel easier and for this reason it is a way to get around the one child policy.

In March elections were held in Hong Kong to elect the new city's next Chief Executive. Hong Kong residents do not yet have the right to directly elect their top official, but the desire for universal suffrage is powerful. Based on the current system fewer than 1,200 electors – largely loyal to Beijing – chose the Chinese city's top official on 25 March. Leung Chun-ying, self-made businessman-turned-politician, won the elections, the candidate surpassingly supported by Beijing. His return was highly unappreciated. On 1 April thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Hong Kong's commercial district to protest against what they perceived as Beijing's meddling in the internal political affairs of their city.



Not just the people who do not stand by Leung. He is very so unpopular with Hong Kong's billionaire property moguls, because they supported Henry Tang, Mr Leung's opponent in the Chief Executive race, the wealthy heir to a family with roots in Shanghai. In contrast Mr Leung, comes from more humble origins and had campaigned on a populist platform and this is not tolerated by the elite.

In June the President of People's Republic of China, Hu Jintao, travelled to Hong Kong to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the return. He received a hostile welcome in the city. The political tension was excessively rising, because the social problems of Hong Kong had reached their nadir since the handover. The social differences are very big, wealth gap is widening and the trust in the Chinese government is very low.

For these reasons and because of the scandals around the election of Chief Executive, small groups of protesters have tried to disrupt his visit without success. Mr. Hu Jintao congratulated Leung Chun-ying and assured him of the support of Beijing. Despite of the protesters and the hostile atmosphere he described the 15th anniversary as a "joyous occasion". The ceremony took place under strict protection and the police had to defend the president from demonstrators, and pepper spray had to be used to dissolve mob who were demanding an investigation into the death in China of a Tiananmen activist, Li Wangyang, earlier this year.



Iran-US Negotiations Postponed

On 3 July 2012 the United States has manoeuvred notable military reinforcements into the Persian Gulf in order to affray the Iranian military from any attempt to bar the Strait of Hormuz and to increase the number of fighter planes capable of striking deep into Iran, if the nuclear program was continued that way. That was a serious step taken by the US government to reassure Israel that they are ready to intervene. Meanwhile the United States and its allies were starting to enforce a more intense embargo on Iran's oil exports to force the country to take the negotiations seriously over severely limiting its nuclear program. US President Barack Obama declared he would like to find a peaceful consensus with the Iranian government.



On 4 July the negotiations were postponed by both sides agreeing on the deputies of their negotiators would meet at a later date. As a consequence, the conflict that had started almost three months ago has not been solved. Iran was threatening with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz answering to the economical pressure generated by the US and Europe. One of the Iranian commanders stated that they can destroy 35 US bases in the first minutes in case of a military conflict.

Pakistan Gives Green Light to NATO Withdrawal

On 3 July 2012 Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State, made a statement that she was sorry for the deaths of two dozen Pakistani soldiers in American air strikes in November, for this reason Pakistan reopened NATO's supply routes into neighbouring Afghanistan. This reconciliation solved a seven-month long international conflict that endangered the counterterrorism co-operation, complicated the American military withdrawal from Afghanistan and generated lot of extra expenditure for the United States.



NATO supply trucks began crossing into Afghanistan after the crisis ended between the two countries. The compromise was necessary for both of the countries.



Increasing Japan-South Korea Security Cooperation

A top national security aide resigned, for the struggling of the South Korean government to disengage itself from the political failure it created by trying to raise military cooperation with Japan. The South Korean government started secret negotiations with Japan to sign a compact about sharing more military information about North Korea. The South Korean government's purpose with the negotiation was to increase military ties with Japan, answering the US's desire to bring the two Asian countries closer as members of a trilateral alliance that could manage more efficiently North Korea's escalating nuclear and missile threats, and with China's expanding military potency.

However the establishment of an agreement has proven to be problematic because the South Koreans are still radically against the military cooperation with Japan. The reason Japan faced hostility with its allies South Korea and the United States was that over women forced to work in Japanese brothels during World War II.



Transitional Justice and the ICC in Libya

At the beginning of July 2012, Libyan authorities released four officials from the International Criminal Court (ICC) who had been arrested for almost a month on charges that one of them had smuggled letters that could endanger national security. The letters were meant for Saif al-Gaddafi, the imprisoned son of the former dictator, Muammar al-Gaddafi. The three suspects were proved innocent, but as Ahmed al-Ghani the Libyan lawyer who was the coordinator between the government and the court stated "They are free, but they will not be coming back."



The group's extrication ended a month long diplomatic struggle. The imprisonment of four international officials, who were entitled to neutrality during their mission, was very disadvantageous for the new Libyan government preparing trials of people accused of impositions in the previous era. It also raised doubts about the government's competence and its comprehension of the international legal process.



Remembrance of a Historic Handshake

On 8 July 2012 Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and François Hollande, the newly elected French president, met on the 50th anniversary of a handshake meant to end a century of enmity between their countries. Fifty years ago Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle shook hands as a gesture to end to a century of war and rancour between the two nations. Chancellor Angela Merkel came to the same place, Reims Cathedral, to commemorate Franco-German friendship with François Hollande the Socialist President of France. The relationship has been deteriorated because of the Continent's euro crisis. The French president with the support of Spain and Italy pushed Ms. Merkel toward a greater commitment to sharing the costs of European debt.



Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea

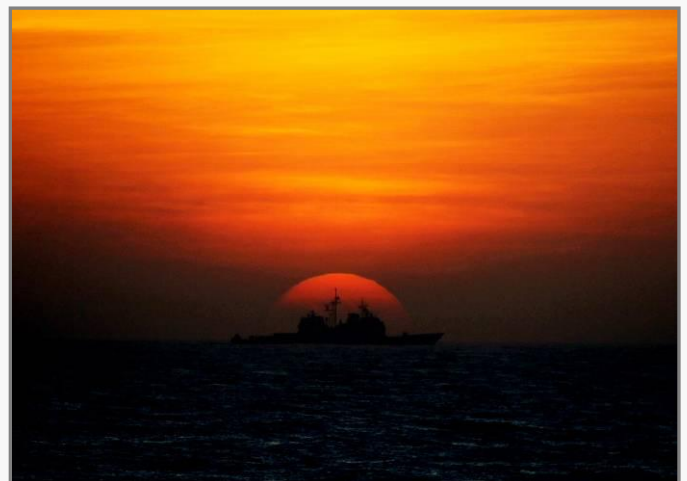
Asian leaders at a regional meeting failed to resolve the debates over South China Sea in Cambodia, on 12 July 2012. Disputes in the strategically important South China Sea proved so controversial here that the conference has ended without even a basic diplomatic communiqué, which has been blocked by the People's Republic of China. Cambodia as the host of the conference should have mediated between the ten participating countries, but it refused to do so, as China's ally.



One week after the conference of foreign ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations, China approved sending soldiers to guard disputed islands. The move appeared designed to reinforce China's claims over the South China Sea. The intensifying disputes have begun to raise warnings over the prospect of open conflict.



Later on this month, on 15 July China's maritime neighbour, Japan temporarily recalled its ambassador to Beijing because of a renewed controversy over the disputed island group. As tensions heightened in South China Sea, due to other disputes with South Korea and the US the Japanese isolation was growing.



Gulf Cooperation

On 12 July 2012 the newly elected President of Egypt, Mohamed Morsi visited King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. This visit was a signal that the two leaders were ready to set aside their ideological dispute to attain a settlement between the two countries. The Saudi Arabian monarchy is the conservative anchor of the authoritarian system that dominated in the Middle East. The monarch was a strong supporter of the former President Hosni Mubarak, even after his regime has ended. In contrast Mohamed Morsi owes his election to the popular uprising that finally destroyed the old regime, which his party the Muslim Brotherhood had struggled for decades. This alliance was gravely needed because Egypt needed Saudi Arabian financial support to weather an economic crisis brought on by its 18 months of commotion. Saudi Arabia for its part needs the Egyptian army, the most formidable Arab army in the area.

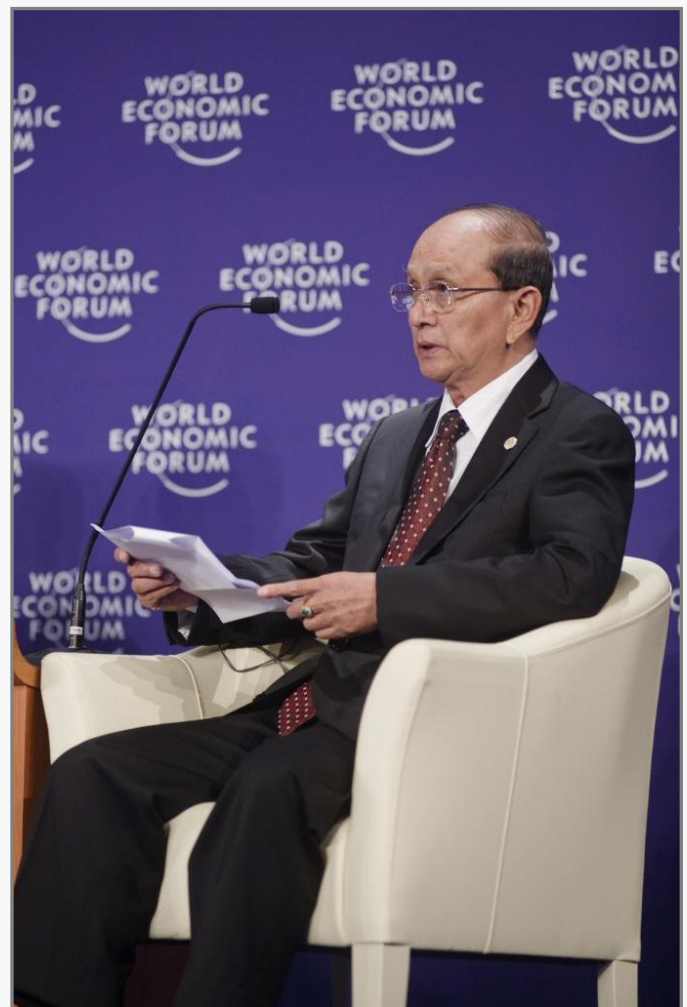


Renewed US-Myanmar Relations

On 13 July 2012 in Cambodia President Thein Sein of Myanmar (and also a former high rank military officer) organised a dinner for American business executives in the city of Siem Reap near the historic ruins of Angkor Wat, inviting the executives to invest in his impoverished country after 25 years. This kind of approximation was without precedent in the last 25 years because of the great Chinese economic and cultural influence on Myanmar.



This discussion followed President Obama's statement of the easing of sanctions on American investments in Myanmar. The decision became definite, after a long period of weighing the undertaken reforms in Myanmar so far up.



Mitt Romney Criticised Palestinian Economy in Israel

At the end of July 2012 during his campaign stop in Israel, US Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney left behind furious Palestinians charging that the candidate has not completely understand the complexity of one of the world's unbending conflicts.



While in Israel, Mitt Romney met with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, but not with Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestine Authority. During the visit Netanyahu openly favoured Romney over President Barack Obama.

Romney's assured the government of Israel of supporting their positions – especially on the Iranian nuclear program. But Palestinian – and some Israeli – critics say that he overshot the mark by seeming to call to order the Palestinians' president, reject their claims to Jerusalem, and suggest their culture is inferior to Israel's. Romney highlighted the big economic differences between Israel – a developed country with the per capita GDP of a developed nation – and the poorer Palestine.



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