

*"Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues"*

# Cultural Relations Policy

## News and Background

# July 2015





## 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.



## Editorial Team

**Series Editor** | Eszter Balogh

**Authors – July 2015** | Yen Duong, Álvaro Palomo, Petra Bruno Chiara Dello Iacono, Miljana Jakovljević, Eszter Balogh, Csilla Morauszki

**Executive Publisher** | Csilla Morauszki

© **Institute for Cultural Relations Policy**

ICRP Geopolitika Kft

45 Gyongyosi utca, Budapest 1031 – Hungary

**ISSN 2063-8205**

# Contents

---



- 01** Rise in the migrant attempts

---

- 03** Greek referendum on the terms of the bailout

---

- 06** France seeking a green future

---

- 08** Clashes at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque

---

- 10** Shift in Turkey's foreign policy - air strikes in Syria

---

- 12** Iraqi Kurdish caught in the Turkey-PKK crossfire

---

- 14** Nuclear deal prevents Iran to produce nuclear weapons

---

- 16** India and Pakistan to join China and Russia

---

- 17** US and Cuba restoring diplomatic relations

---

- 19** Two explosions hit Colombian capital

---

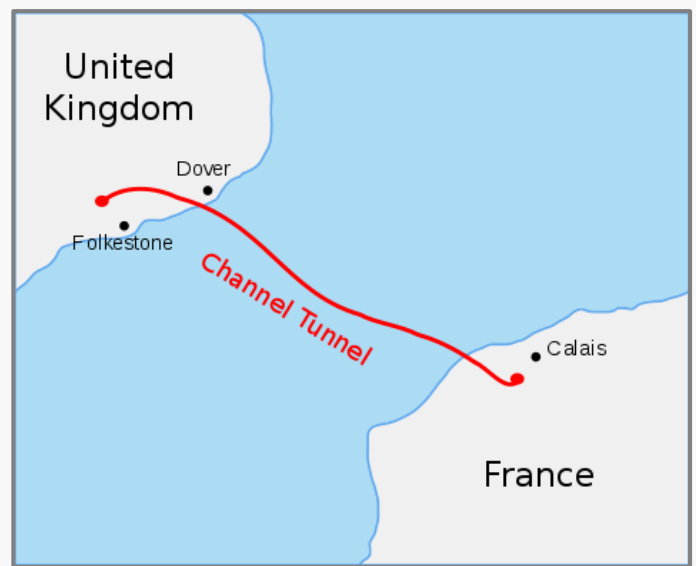
- 20** News in Brief

## Rise in the migrant attempts to reach irregularly the United Kingdom from Calais

**The number of migrants** trying to reach irregularly the United Kingdom (UK) through the Channel Tunnel in Calais (France) has increased in July.

The Eurotunnel, which runs the Channel Tunnel, says that the cooperation between the UK and French authorities have prevented more than 37,000 attempts of crossing the Channel illegally during the first semester of 2015. Despite the British Home Office says that it is impossible to know how many irregular migrants have succeed arriving to the UK, Kent police department calculate that 70% of the attempts achieves their goal. However, there were 18,170 migrants detained during the first half of 2015, according to the French police which has increased its deployment in Calais with 120 guards more. This situation has reached its peak in July and only between Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 there were 3,500 attempts.

Before crossing, many migrants live in "the Jungle", a camp in Calais where there are between 3,000, according to French authorities estimations, and 5,000 migrants, as reported by Eurotunnel and police. In their improvised camp they have constructed a temporary settlement, but



*The course of the Channel Tunnel.  
Map: Wikimedia Commons*

despite the help of the citizens from the village, not all the needs are covered. When the time of the attempt arrives, they commonly hide in the back of lorries, trains, ferries and in people's cars. The UK Home Secretary Theresa May says there are mafias in Calais working on human trafficking. Nine people have died in this struggle between June and July.

Most migrants are fleeing the violence and unsafety of their countries seeking asylum in the UK. In 2014, there were 31,745 asylum claims in the country, according to Eurostat, less than in Germany, Sweden,



Italy, France and Hungary. However, the UK government says there were 24,914 applications due to a different methodology. Among them, the 38.8% gained the refugee status or an alternative aid. The main precedencies of these asylum seekers were Pakistan, Eritrea, Iran, Syria and Albania. In the first quarter of 2015 these precedencies have not changed. Both asylum seekers and economic migrants are attracted by the better opportunities that they can get in the UK in comparison with the ones they

Channel and to create a new security zone for lorries so that migrants will not be able to hide in them, and it has brought the National Barrier Asset, a fence of 2.7 metres high which is easy to assemble. The main purpose of the fence is to prevent attacks and for the first time it will be settled outside the state borders.

The UK has also used the Operation Stack that enable the Kent Police to park freight vehicles on the M20 in Kent to inspect them. The operation has been launched since 1996 but this summer it has been

“Ideas on the table are to fine hosts who guest irregular migrants, fasten extraditions or forbid health care to denied asylum claims”

can get in France, says Mayor of Calais Natacha Bouchart. And there are more factors like the low unemployment (5.6%), the inexistence of an identity card, the English language or the belief that it is easy to get a job even without the proper documentation.

The Eurotunnel, which complains that it is not their responsibility to tackle migratory flows, has spent 9.2 million pounds on fences, cameras, infra-red detectors and extra guards. Besides, the UK has cooperated with 21 million pounds for a three year plan to solve the crisis, to improve the control in the entrance of the

activated many times, says the Freight Transport Association (FTA). The FTA denounces that the consequent delays have provoked money losses.

The British government is organising meetings to decide what to do to tackle the crisis. Ideas on the table are to fine hosts who guest irregular migrants, fasten extraditions or forbid health care to denied asylum claims. In the following weeks, French and British authorities with the help of the European Commission will work together in order to bring solutions. Meanwhile, migrants in Calais will continue their attempts to reach the UK.



## Greek referendum on the terms of the bailout



*Alexis Tsipras. Photo: Wikimedia Commons*

**If Greek people are still supporting** the weight of the economic and financial crisis, in a televised speech, the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, after months of difficult struggle against the policy of austerity, said that the offers were blackmail and ultimatum against the European values. He asked for the help of his people proposing a referendum on 5 July 2015 to check if the whole plan of arrangement by the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund in the Euro group of 25 June 2015 must be accepted. After these words there was the panic between people: queue in front of supermarkets and banks, where millions of euro were withdrawn in

one day. Greek people were ready for the worst. The Minister of Development, Panayiotis Lafazanis, asked to Greek people to vote against the international plan made by the creditors. Yanis Varoufakis, the ex-Minister of the Economy said: "Democracy deserved a boost in euro-related matters. We just delivered it. Let the people decide it. (Funny how radical this concept sounds!)". The Greek opposition criticized Tsipras, because they thought that this choice will bring Greece out of Europe, the Grexit.

The arrangement plan of creditors was made up on two documents: the first was entitled "Reforms for the Completion of the Current Program and Beyond" and the second "Preliminary Debt Sustainability Analysis". Besides the questions there were two boxes for the options: yes, to accept the conditions proposed by international creditors, a no to start new negotiations.

Although the article 44 paragraph 2 of the Greek Constitution prohibits, for any reason, to hold a referendum on issues of public finance. Anyway, the referendum has been take on and Greek people decided for a resounding no. According with the Greek Interior Ministry the 38,7% decided for the



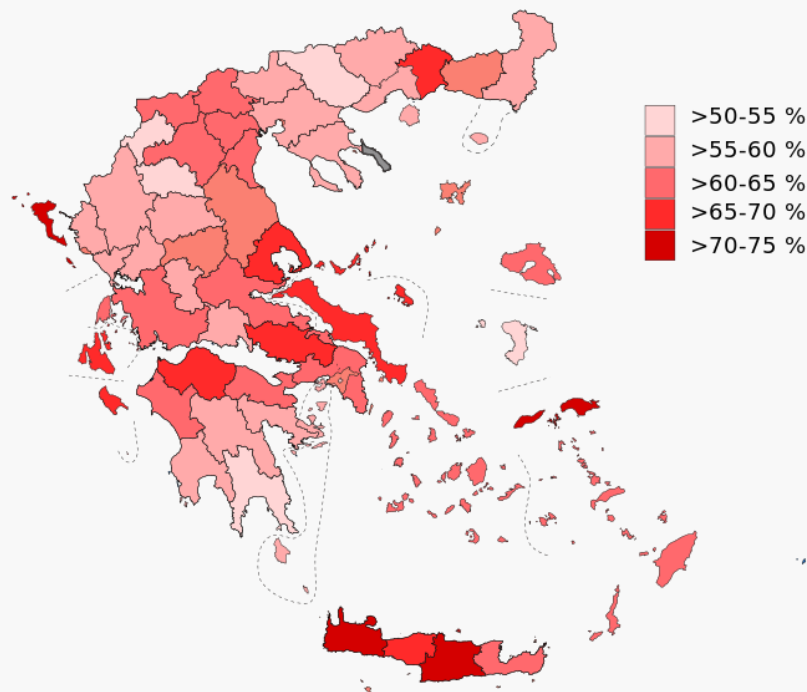
yes (Nai) and the 61,3% for the no (Oxi). Greece's governing Syriza party had campaigned for a "no" saying the bailout terms were humiliating.

Alexis Tsipras said: "We want an agreement to exit from the austerity. We want a Europe of solidarity". According to the prime minister the "no" is not a sign of rupture against Europe, but a new starting point to bring the justice.

In Syntagma Square, outside the parliament, when it was shown the "Oxi" of the victory, people started to celebrate as if there was a new beginning. After the results, the Greek Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis announced his resignation, explaining that it had decided to leave after pressure received by the Euro group and to give more opportunities to Tsipras to continue the negotiations. Varoufakis was

among the most intransigent interlocutors of the Greek government and only on Saturday he called "terrorists" the international creditors. The courageous vote of Greece has shaken Europe: the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the French Prime Minister Francois Hollande demanded for the convening of a Eurozone summit; while, the president of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker began a series of consultations with various leaders of Eurozone countries. Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament said: "The proposal rejected by Greek people, was the one shared by 18 countries. Now the Greek parliament should draw up a proposal that would convince other nations".

The situation in Greece is still critical and the banks need new emergency liquidity from



„NO“ vote results by region. Map: Wikimedia Commons



the European Central Bank. With the victory of the no, it is hard to think that Mario Draghi will return to raise the level of loans, without a clear draft agreement between Greece and the EU. Formally, the ECB can lend money until the banks are solvent but right now the situation is really complicated.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras after the result of the polls thanked the Greek people saying: “democracy cannot be blackmailed”. He pointed out towards an agreement to exit austerity that includes the debt restructuring, along with a plan to re-open as soon as the banks.



„NO” sign during the referendum protests. Photo: Jan Wellman

“With the victory of the no,  
it is hard to think that Mario Draghi  
will return to raise the level of loans”

### Greek parliament approve bailout measures and reforms

After a long and exhausting debate, the Greek parliament said yes to the package of the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. The package was approved with 229 votes in favour, 64 against and 6 abstentions. Pangiotis Lafazanis, Minister of Energy, the ex-Minister of Finance Varoufakis and Zoe Konstantopoulou, President of the parliament have rejected the package. The Prime Minister said: “I take all my responsibility and I feel proud. We fought for our people a very difficult fight. We were able to give a lesson of dignity to the whole world”. If the debate within the parliament has almost led to the breakdown of Syriza, in Syntagma Square, in front of the Parliament, exploded violence. There were clashes between anti-austerity protesters and police who responded with tear gas. After a while, the calm was reported and at least 50 people were arrested.





## France seeking a green future

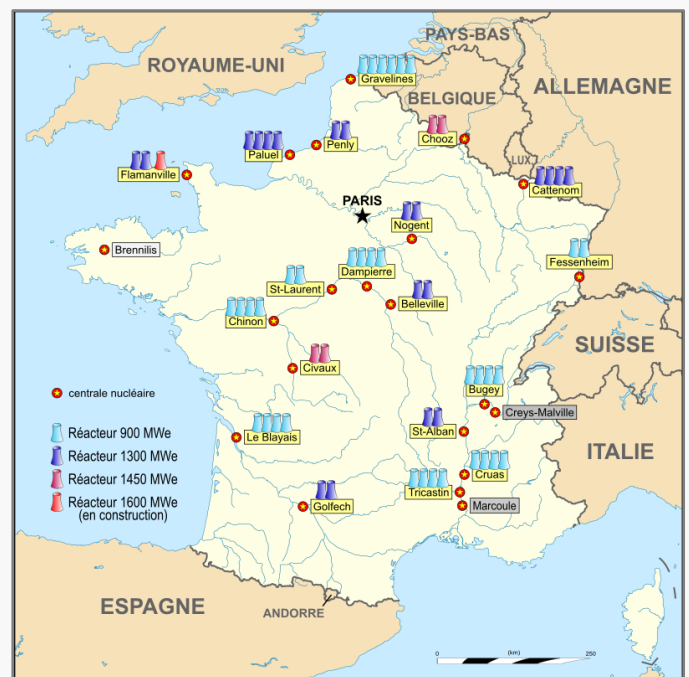
### In accordance with French President

Francois Hollande's election promises in 2012, France passed a new law aiming to reduce the country's environmental footprint. The bill orders to cut back the overall energy consumption by 20 percent and the primary fossil fuel consumption by 30 percent by 2030. To make sure that everyone follows the goals, the carbon taxes will be radically increased, from the current 14.50 euros per ton to 100 euros by 2030 with an internal period of 22 euros by 2016.

In spite of the impressive numbers, the part of the law which concerns the country's nuclear power use triggered more



Nuclear power plant in Cattenom, France. Photo: Stefan Kühn



French nuclear power plants. Map: Eric Gaba

international reaction. Currently, France is the world's second biggest nuclear power producer with 58 reactors and 19 power stations. In international rankings, it is also the most nuclear power dependent country in terms of electricity use. The bill aims to cut back this tremendous nuclear power production by a third by 2025, which means that it will give 50 percent of the electricity mix.

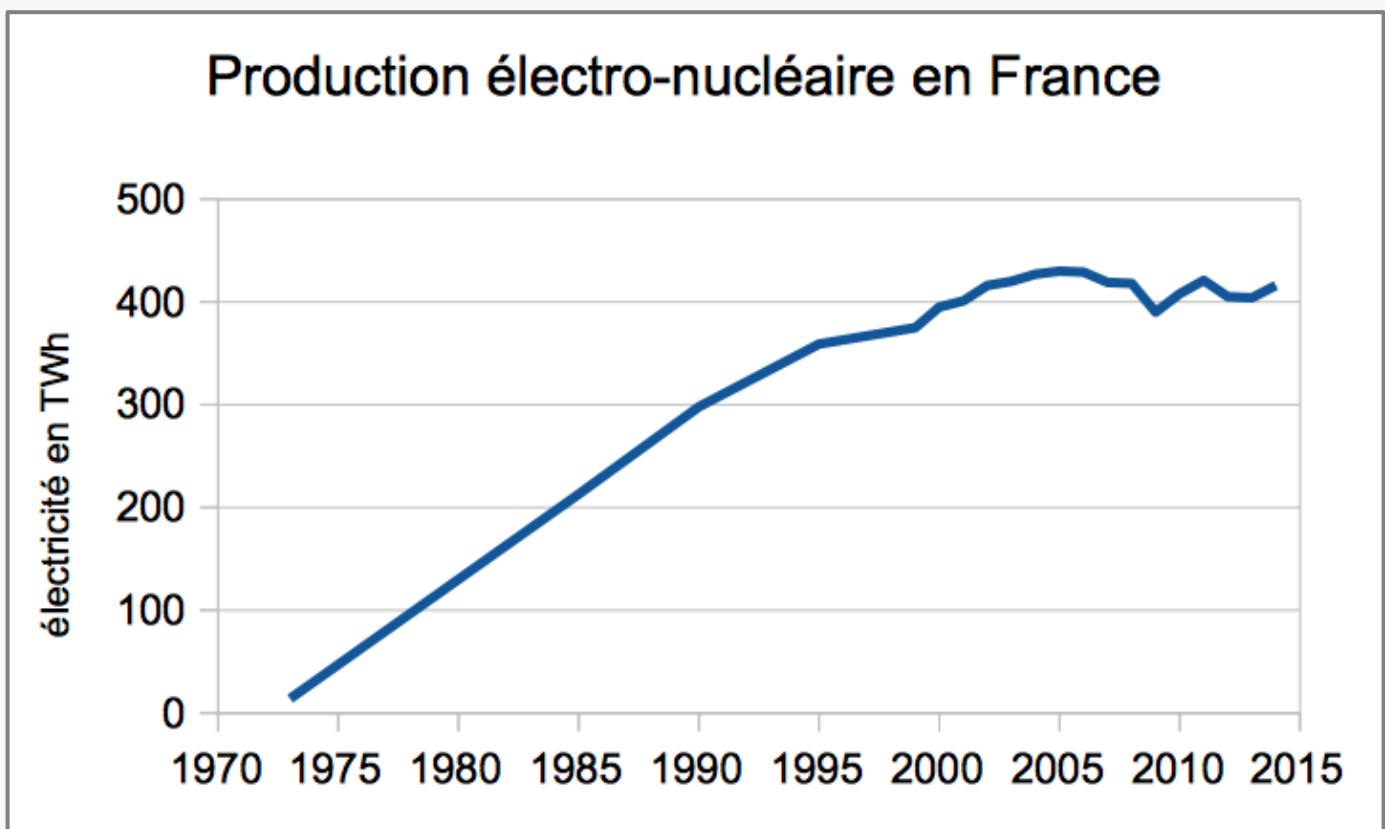
The new law can be considered as a framework for further discussions, as there



are no concrete steps defined for reaching these goals. Therefore there is no planned closure of appointed nuclear plants, nor is the way set to the shift to renewable energy use. Greenpeace considers it a possible threat; as their energy campaigner, Yannick Rousselet commented the events: "This law sets goals, which is interesting, but it doesn't explain how to reach them... postponement of the detailed implementation plans is not a good sign". In spite of the negative opinions, the details for a three-year period are due to be worked out by the end of this year. There are also fears that the changes are going to cause sectoral crisis on the labour

market, as thousands of people can lose their jobs only with the closing of nuclear power plants. Today about 220,000 people work in this industry, but according to the government, the reforms will create 100,000 new jobs in the renewable energy sector in the next three years.

France is going to host a major United Nation conference on climate change in the end of 2015. The new law with all its negative aspects can mean a very important precedent for other countries in further legislation, showing that such changes are possible to make. It also indicates a strong leadership potential from France, which can be vital in the negotiation process.



*Nuclear power production of France. Chart: Wikimedia Commons*



## Clashes at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque during Jewish holiday

**Clashes between** Israeli police and Palestinian Muslims have erupted in the Al-Aqsa compound in East Jerusalem during Tisha B'Av, a fast holiday in Judaism that takes place annually on 26 July to commemorate the number of disasters in Jewish history and the destruction of a Holy Temple by the Romans in 70 CE.

The confrontation between the Israeli forces and the Palestinians broke out when

and firebombs directed at the police, who in turns responded with stun grenades and tear gas. A number of police officers were injured, while there were no immediate reports of Palestinian casualties. Six Palestinians protesters involved in the riot were arrested, according to the source.

Al-Aqsa mosque is regarded as one of the holiest sites by both religions, known by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary (Haram Al-

“Masked rioters were blocking the site by throwing stones and firebombs directed at the police, who in turns responded with stun grenades and tear gas”

the police stormed the courtyard to wipe out the Palestinian youths who had reportedly barricaded themselves inside the mosque to prevent Jews from entering the site.

In a statement quoted by AFP, Israeli security forces said that masked rioters were blocking the site by throwing stones

Sharif) and by Jews as the Temple Mount. The complex has been a frequent flashpoint of religious and political clashes between Israelis and Palestinians. Jews are allowed to enter the mosque, but are forbidden from praying inside for fear of tensions with Palestinian worshippers. Violence at the complex has been



reported in the past year, when some Israeli ultranationalists began to challenge the ban against Jewish prayers, while Palestinians protested against the restriction of Palestinian Muslims to the site. Al-Aqsa has been annexed under Israeli rule since it took control of the Old City from Jordan during the six days war in 1967. Tensions between the two groups had been high

since before the Tisha B'Av, after a video emerged over the weekend recording an Orthodox Jewish woman throwing insults of Prophet Muhammad at a group of Palestinian women outside the mosque. Hatem Abdul Qader, Fatah representative in Jerusalem, blamed the violence on the Jewish nationalists, while Israel accused Palestinian leaders of provoking the riot.



*The Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount. Photo: Wikimedia Commons*

### **Palestinian fatally shot during West Bank raid**

During an arrest raid in Beit Ummar, a West Bank village in the northwest of Hebron, Israeli forces shot and killed 53-year-old Falah Abu Marya. The arrest mission was to detain Falah's son, Mohammad, following the wanted issued by Shin Bet security services. Falah was fatally wounded when trying to defend for his son, who was injured in the leg by the Israeli troops. This was the second fatal shooting during West Bank raids within just two days, after the death of 21-year-old Mohammed Ahmed Alauna in the farming town of Jenin. According to UN statistics, from the beginning of 2015, there have been at least 16 Palestinians killed and 1,000 injured in the occupied West Bank.



## Shift in Turkey's foreign policy - air strikes in Syria



*Turkish airforce equipment. Photo: Wikimedia Commons*

**Turkey has carried out air strikes** for the first time against the Islamic State's (IS) positions in Syria after a Turkish soldier had been killed in a cross-border attack and a suicide bombing had required the life of 32 people in the Southern province of Suruc, near the Syrian border. Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has confirmed that Turkish F-16 warplanes "completely destroyed" their targets, including a base presumably to be one of the IS's headquarters. Nine IS fighters were killed and 12 injured in the attack. This series of events can be considered as a

major shift in Turkey's foreign policy as it has long been reluctant to take military actions against the IS and thereby engage the US-led coalition in this matter.

According to news agencies, a deal has been made between the two parties providing access for the United States and its Western allies to use Turkish air bases near its Syrian border. The plan would also create a so-called Islamic State-free zone controlled by moderate Syrian insurgents and being a "safe zone" for displaced Syrians. "Details remain to be worked out, but what we are talking about with Turkey is cooperating to support partners on the ground in northern Syria who are countering IS. The goal is to establish an IS-free zone and ensure greater security and stability along Turkey's border with Syria" – said a US administration official. "Turkey and the US have decided to further deepen the existing cooperation against the IS" – told the reporters Mevlüt Cavusoglu, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs. The agreement has also been confirmed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, however exact details – such as how the buffer zone will be policed or whether it will include a de facto no-fly



zone – have remained unclear. Latter has been a longstanding demand of the Turkish government refused by the United States. Another interesting question is how the safe zone will affect the Kurds. Turkish government is concerned that the success of Kurdish forces in northern Syria alongside the help of US warplanes and military actions which have pushed back the IS, will spur separatist sentiments among its own Kurds and encourage the PKK. Turkish officials have declared that ongoing military operations did not intend to target the Syrian Kurds, they only seek to neutralise imminent threats to Turkey's national security and they continue to target the IS in Syria and the PKK in Iraq. This statement seems to be confirmed by the fact that Turkish government has started a hunt for hundreds of militants likely to be connected to the IS or the PKK. Arrests took place not only in Istanbul but in Ankara, Izmir and in Sanliurfa province as well and almost 300 people were taken into custody. As Prime

Minister Davutoglu said: "The state of the Turkish Republic is adamant on fighting all terrorism without distinction as it has always done, be it the terrorist organisation of Daesh [IS], the terrorist organisation of the PKK or any other international terrorist organisation".

Government's measures have raised tensions in Istanbul where violent demonstrations have taken place and a policeman has been killed. Kurdish politicians have accused President Erdogan of "setting the country on fire" and directing more force against the PKK than against the IS. They have also emphasized that the campaign against the PKK jeopardises the already very fragile peace process between the Turkish State and the Kurdish rebels.

As a result of recent incidents, Turkey has requested to hold an emergency NATO meeting to discuss security issues and possible future military measures to take place in the area.



*Kurdish forces in Syria. Photo: BijiKurdistan [Flickr]*



## Iraqi Kurdish caught in the Turkey-PKK crossfire

**Just 80 miles away from Makhmour**, the refugee camp that has been sheltering nearly 12,000 Turkish Kurds fleeing the internal conflict since 1994, Iraqi Kurds in the town of Zargali were once again trapped in the fight between Turkish forces and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). The attack was condemned by Iraqi government as “a dangerous escalation and an assault on Iraqi sovereignty” while Iraqi Kurdish President Massoud Barzai also urged Turkey to stop the bombardments on civilians and PKK to withdraw its fighters from civilian areas, calling on the two groups to resume the peace talk as soon as possible. Over the last week of July, Turkish fighter jets have raided northern Iraq, PKK,



Lockheed Martin F-16D Fighting Falcon. Photo: Aldo Bidini



PKK and Peshmerga fighters.  
Photo: BikiKurdistan [flickr]

targeting PKK camps, depots and caves, killing at least 6 civilians and wounded several others. According to the Turkish news agency Anadolu, since the beginning of the campaign, more than 260 Kurdish militants have been killed.

Just a few days earlier, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that it was impossible to hold on to the peace process with the Kurdish militants, and denounced any politicians associated with demanding to strip them of their immunity from prosecution. The accusation was directly aiming at the leader of HDP (pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party), who



succeeded in gaining grounds in the last election with 13% votes and 79 seats in the Parliament.

The air strikes in northern Iraq were a response to a series of killing of Turkish policemen that PKK claimed responsible. PKK spokesman Zagros Hiwa also announced that the Turkish air raids in the region has put an end to the peace process between the two groups.

The Kurdish-Turkish peace process, which was launched in 2002, is an effort for a ceasefire to the bloody conflict between Turkish government and Kurdish forces that had been going on since 1984, resulting in more than 40,000 deaths and forcing thousands of Kurdish families to flee from Turkey to escape persecution.

Turkish government launched the campaign against PKK alongside with the attack against ISIS in northern Iraq. Turkey's decision has received support from both the NATO and the US, who considered it as a vital move for Turkey's self-defence. At the same time, this campaign against the Kurdish forces in Iraq has also raised concerns since the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds,

who are also closely linked to PKK, have been crucial in fighting against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. The PKK also sees themselves as freedom fighters in the battles against the ISIS threat, despite the fact that they are considered a terrorist group by both Turkey and many Western countries. Meanwhile, the minority Kurds in the northern Iraq are still trapped in the clash between the two groups. Many have fled their villages to avoid the range of air raids from the Turkish jets, that for them, shred no difference from the terror of ISIS. Turkey has denied Zargali as a target at the civilians, and that the air strikes have been carefully planned.

Falah Mustafa Bakir, Kurdistan's foreign minister, told a small group of reporters in Washington, "We are caught in between two sides. Both sides decided that there is no ceasefire, that's why we are caught in between," Bakir continued. "We neither agree with the PKK [decision] to announce that the ceasefire is over, nor do we agree on the Kurdistan region to be bombarded, because this is not the solution – it only escalates the tension and it leads to more violence."

“Many have fled their villages to avoid the range of air raids from the Turkish jets, that for them, shred no difference from the terror of ISIS”





## Nuclear deal prevents Iran to produce nuclear weapons

**Iran and the P5+1 countries** (United States, United Kingdom, France, China and Russia plus Germany) signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on 14 July. The deal reaffirms that Iran will never acquire or develop nuclear weapons, introduces limitations in the Iranian nuclear programme and lifts the international sanctions on the country. According to the US, Iran only needed between two and three months to enrich uranium up to 90% to build a nuclear

weapon with their stockpile and their 20,000 centrifuges. The agreement will prevent this situation, although Iranian authorities say that their nuclear program has peaceful purposes and they assert their right to develop it.

The limitations will affect the two uranium enrichment facilities in Iran, Natanz and Fordow. In Natanz, the new plan has limited the number of IR-1 centrifuges to 5,060 and Fordow will be converted into a nuclear, physics and technology centre.



*P5+1 leaders after announcing the agreement. Photo: U.S. Department of State*



Besides, all other centrifuges will be removed, research and development will be cut and any activity related to nuclear devices will be forbidden.

The main purposes of some infrastructure of enrichment will change. The heavy-water research reactor in Arak will work on peaceful nuclear research and medical and instructional functions. Heavy-water reactors contains plutonium that can be used to produce nuclear bombs, but with the agreement it will not be able to produce them and it also prohibits Iran to build heavy water reactors in the long term

sanctions and restrictions implemented in Iran regarding its nuclear programme like the asset freeze, the ban on Iranian financial institutions and on the trade of their oil and natural gas or the restrictions on the supply of nuclear equipment. On the one hand, Iran visualize the JCPOA deal as an economic relief and a solution to the crisis. On the other hand, US president Barack Obama said it is “one more chapter in our pursuit of a safer, more helpful and more hopeful world”. However, not all the international community have hailed it. “A stunning historic mistake”,

“One more chapter in our  
pursuit of a safer, more helpful  
and more hopeful world”  
- Barack Obama

plan of the next 15 years. Iran was enriching uranium up to 20% and maintaining a stockpile of near 10,000 kg of low-enriched uranium but in the accorded plan the country will not be able to exceed 3,67% of enrichment and its stockpile will not be more than 300 kg. All this process will be monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In exchange, Iran's economy will prosper due to the lifting of the sanctions. If the reports of the IAEA show that Iran is following the measures, the UN Security Council, the IAEA, The European Union and the United States will terminate the

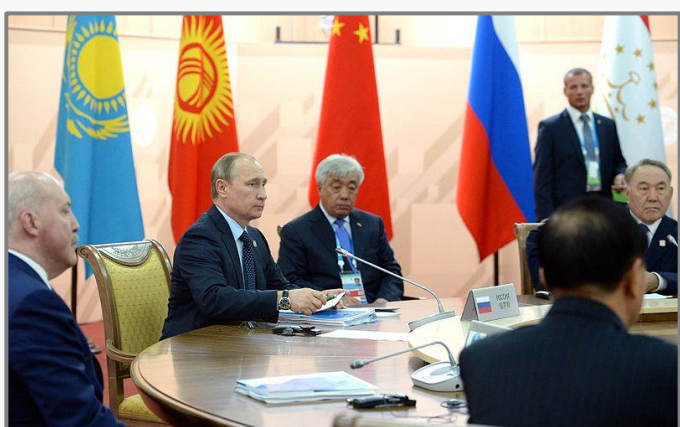
considered Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who heads the countries that do not believe Iranian peaceful intentions, including Saudi Arabia.



Secretary Kerry shakes hands with minister Zarif. Photo: U.S. Department of State



## India and Pakistan to join China and Russia in security group



2015 Summit of the SCO. Photo: Пресс-служба Президента России

**In the beginning of July**, it was announced that India and Pakistan will join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation that have since been granted observer status. The SCO was founded in 1996 and is serves as a forum for limited consultation and cooperation on political, economic, and military matters. This will be the first expansion that has taken place since 2011 in the Russian and Chinese dominated group which is composed of former Soviet republics of Central Asia. The expansion will also see the addition of 1.5 billion people. This will hopefully lead to the expansion of the SCO scope as well as its development. This can be verified by a statement made by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Cheng Guoping: "India and Pakistan's admission

to the SCO will play an important role in the SCO's development. It will play a constructive role in pushing for the improvement of their bilateral relations." Historically, India and Pakistan have been nuclear rivals. In fact, both states have fought three wars since 1947, two of which concerned with the divided Muslim-majority region of Kashmir. There are different gains for all actors with regards to this expansion. The addition of Pakistan and India could possibly lead to some conflict resolution between New Delhi and Islamabad. For this reason, the two leaders agreed in a separate meeting in Ufa that Modi would visit Pakistan next year. Furthermore, the joining of a group that include energy producers may be beneficial to India that lacks direct access to Central Asia.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi were in Moscow in July for a summit of the BRICS group of emerging markets and whilst there, both India and Pakistan, represented by Mr Nawaz Sharif will attend a special SCO "outreach" session as part of the gathering. According to statements by a Russian official, India's and Pakistan's accession is expected to conclude in 2016.

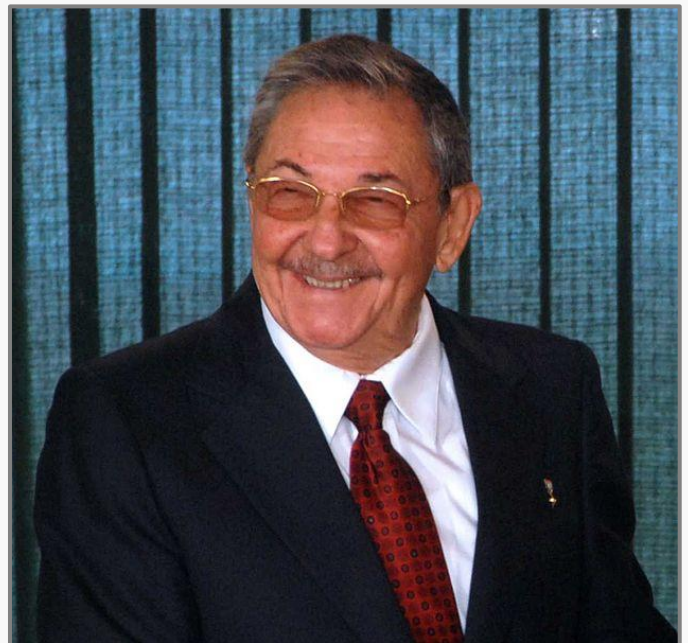


## US and Cuba restoring diplomatic relations

**Diplomatic relations** between Cuba and the US have been completely severed in the last decades. However, last December US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced that they will be working on restoring and rebuilding diplomatic relations. This step has taken place after fifty four years of turbulent interactions between the two states. As a consolidator act the two opened embassies on the 20th July. The Cuban embassy has been opened in Washington D.C whilst an American embassy has been put in operation in Havana. The two states maintain that with the opening of the embassies, the two states will have the opportunity to reset their relations and start



*US President Barack Obama. Photo: Center for American Progress Action Fund*



*Cuban President Raúl Castro. Photo: Roosevelt Pinheiro/ABr*

anew. At the inauguration ceremony, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez seized the opportunity to urge President Barack Obama to employ executive powers in order to dismantle the economic embargo. This is considered as the main barrier to full normalisation of ties and relation. On the other hand, the Obama administration pressed Havana for improvement with regards to human rights. Even though friction is still present on different issues, it can be held that the reopening of the embassies serve as



symbols of cooperation's. The embassies are the final product of the negotiations between the governments which took around two years to finalise. In addition to this, Secretary of State John Kerry has invited Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez for talks at the State Department. This is seen as a step towards furthering relations and an act to dissolve half-century of enmity. One should note that this hosting will be the first visit of a Cuban foreign minister in Washington since the Cuban Revolution took place.

Having said this, it can also be said that the completion of normalisation of relations between the two states may be long and complex however this is a new step towards that path. Obama has modestly eased some business and travel restrictions however, the broader fifty three year old embargo remains in place. One should appreciate that this can only be lifted by Congress, something majority Republicans are unlikely to do anytime soon despite the Democratic president's appeal for it to be rescinded.

“This hosting will be the first visit of a Cuban foreign minister in Washington since the Cuban Revolution took place”



*The newly opened Cuban embassy in Washington. Photo: Wikimedia Commons*



## Two explosions hit Colombian capital

**On 2 July 2015**, after a period of relative calm, two bombs exploded in Bogota, the Colombian capital. The two devices were most likely direct against a private pension firm: the Porvenir.

According to the local authorities, the first explosion occurred in the city's financial district, where the Porvenir's office is situated; while, the second one in Puente Aranda, the west side of the city, where there was a wild branch of Porvenir. In total were injured eight people, but the Ministry of Health reported that they are not in critical condition.

Joshua Goodman, the Bogota bureau chief for the Associated Press said: "It is not so common this kind of violence". According to him, the possibility remains that the bombings in Bogota are unrelated to June bombings of oil pipelines in rural parts of Colombia and it is possible because in the Colombian cities there are a lot of criminal gangs and extortion rackets. Anyway, no one claimed the responsibility for this attack, even if it took place, when there was a conflict between the Colombian government and the

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the country's largest rebel movement. The Head of the state, Juan Manuel Santos returned precipitously from Peru, where he was attending the summit of the Common Market of the Pacific Alliance, condemned the attacks. The Pacific Alliance was created with the vision of regional integration initiative formed by Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, but recent agreements signed by the leaders of the alliance have been criticized by social movements in Colombia and agricultural organizations, because according with them it was a purely commercial alliance. Santos said that those who resort to terrorism demonstrate weakness and cowardice.

Humberto Guatibonza, the commander of the Bogota Metropolitan Police, said that the authorities are working to try to find the responsible for the attacks while the Defence Minister Luis Carlos Villegas, announced that the government is offering a reward of 100 million pesos for the capture of those responsible for these explosions.



## ■ News in Brief

# Domestic affairs affecting international relations

### **Anti – ISIL cartoon exhibition in Tehran**

■ Starting with 23rd of June and ending with 14th of July Palestine Museum of Contemporary Arts hosted an exhibition from the “International DAESH Cartoon and Caricature Contest 2015”. More than 1,000 artworks were presented to the jury, but only 150 of them created by the artists from 43 countries, were offered to the wider audience. These numbers are quite impressive considering that some of the artists took great risk just to be part of this exhibition, not to mention that many of them had to use pseudonyms due to their own safety. Aim of this exhibition was not just to fight the terrorism, but also to foster a dialogue. Although, artworks can be seen online, idea of the organisers is to show them in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon as well.

“The terrorist group of the Islamic State claimed the responsibility for the most violent and bloody attack perpetuated. They said that their goal was to hit the infidels, in other words the group of Shiite Muslims”

### **Islamic State suicide car bomb kills over 100 in Iraq**

■ On 18 July 2015, a car bomb exploded in a busy market of Khan Bani Saad, in the northeast of Baghdad, Iraq. More than 100 people, included children were killed while they were celebrated the Eid al-Fitr, the end of the Ramadan. The terrorist group of the Islamic State claimed the responsibility for the most violent and bloody attack perpetuated. They said that their goal was to hit the infidels, in other words the group of Shiite Muslims. According to the police, the explosion of the car bomb caused the collapse of several buildings and many people were using vegetable boxes to collect children's body parts. After that catastrophic scene, the authorities of Diyala's region cancelled the celebrations and proclaimed three days of national mourning.



### Ultra-Orthodox Jewish man stabbed 6 at Jerusalem gay pride parade

■ An ultra-Orthodox Israeli recently released after a 10-year sentence for stabbing people at the Jerusalem annual gay pride in 2005, has repeated his crime in this year's parade. The attack has seriously injured 6 marchers, including 16-year-old Shira Banki, who later died of her wounds in the hospital. The stabbing spree has been widely condemned, which provoked protests across Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and other cities, calling the Israeli authorities to take firmer actions to end discrimination against the LGBT community. Unlike the Tel Aviv gay parade, the Jerusalem's annual Gay Parade is smaller in size and has long been strongly opposed and referred to as "the Parade of Abomination" by the Orthodox Jews in the city.



Peace Now demonstration in Rabin Square following the Jerusalem gay pride parade. The sign says: "Terror Tag. This is not a youth movement, and these are not pranks". Photo: Oren Rozen

### Lebanese waste-disposal crisis

■ Hundreds of protestors have poured into Riad el-Solh square to demonstrate against the sea of garbage that is mounting on the streets of Beirut. Trash collection in Beirut and its suburbs was suspended after activists blocked the route to Naameh, Lebanon's main and overloaded landfill, to stop the garbage trucks from operating. The angry crowds of protestors accused the government of being neglected and unable to solve the city's waste-disposal problems, which is connected to the country's political conflict, as the Parliament and the cabinet have been paralyzed and Lebanon's presidency left vacant for over a year.





### Burundi opposition leader takes top parliament post

■ With almost the 70 percentage of the vote, Pierre Nkurunziza won the presidential election in Burundi held in a climate of high tension. At the end of July, Agathon Rwaswa, the leader of opposition Amizero y'Abarundi, has been elected as deputy head of the national parliament. The leader of the former rebels of the National Liberation Forces (FLN) asked to boycott the legislative elections because he considered the candidacy of Nkurunziza unconstitutional. However, after the results of the elections, Rwaswa decided to accept the designation deputy. This election has generated a series of controversies and many considered it a betrayal against the Burundi situation. After the third mandate of Nkurunziza, the Burundi faces a social and political crisis. Rwaswa said that he will “play the game” in order to bring the peace and find a solution to the country’s crisis. According to the Menub, the Onu mission, the election of Pierre Nkurunziza is still considered as not credible and unconstitutional.



*Pierre Nkurunziza, President of Burundi.  
Photo: World Economic Forum*

“Many considered the election a betrayal against the Burundi situation”

### Deadly bomb blasts rip through Nigerian bus stations

■ In the city of Gombe, northeast of Nigeria, two bombs exploded. The first blast struck near the Dadin Kowa terminal and the second one, a few minutes later, was reported at the Dukku bus station. At least 37 people have been killed in the explosions and several were injured, children included. Nowadays nobody claimed the responsibility for the attack, but according to local press, it was made by the Boko Haram militias. This group during the holy month intensified its attacks in an attempt to resume the war against the Nigerian state and the Nigeria’s new president: Mohammedu Buhari.



## ■ News in Brief

### Bilateral relations

#### Chinese artists representing Kenya at Venice Biennale

■ For the second time in its history Kenya is having pavilion on its own at Venice Biennale and also for the second time it is represented mostly by the Chinese artists. Back in 2013, there were only two of Kenyan artists out of 12 of them in total, and in 2015 only one. Both time selection was made by Paola Poconi, Italian curator, whom curatorial pre-Venice work is not known. Since this caused rage among Kenyan artists, they have already started to negotiate about the representatives for the year of 2017, though their hopes are not high.

#### Obama in Kenya

■ Recently, current president of the US Barack Obama have visited for the first time the country where his father was born. Cause of his visit was opening a US sponsored business summit in Nairobi that took place due to the fact that US considers Africa to be at a time place with most opening opportunities and one of the fastest growing regions. During his visit, he has also met the president of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta. Even though Barack Obama tackled some serious questions like gay rights, counterterrorism practices and corruption he is still considered to be one of the most popular politicians in Kenya.



Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta with Obamas in 2014. Photo: Office of the White House



## ■ News in Brief

### International relations

#### **NATO friendly fire incident kills ten Afghan soldiers**

■ Ten afghan soldiers, according to afghan authorities, were killed on 20 July, after two US helicopters from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombed a checkpoint of the Afghan National Army in Baraki Barak district of Logar, Afghanistan, where Taliban troops are active. The district governor Mohammad Rahim Amin described the friendly fire incident as a mistake caused by a bad coordination and the authorities have opened an investigation to find out the reason of the attack. The NATO finished its combat mission in Afghanistan in December 2014, but in January 2015 it launched the operation Resolute Support to help and train afghan forces and institutions.

#### **Hiroshima and Nagasaki – seventy years later**

■ The first deployment of nuclear weapons was on 6 August of 1945 in the Japanese city Hiroshima. The second attack took place three days later in Nagasaki. The two bombs left devastating effects which include the death of around 130,000 people which were both soldiers as well as civilians. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe laid a wreath of flowers at the ceremony. This ceremony was also attended by representatives from seventy five countries including US ambassador Caroline Kennedy. Prime Minister Abe's speech at the ceremony included Japan's determination to lead global disarmament. He also maintained that Japan will continue to hold close to heart the principles of not producing, possessing or allowing nuclear weapons on Japanese territory.

#### **First Holocaust Chair**

■ Exactly 70 years after the end of World War II and a century after its founding, Goethe University in Frankfurt decided to establish first professorship dedicated to the study of the Holocaust. Similar studies of a Holocaust already exists on various universities around the world; further on, recently a Hungarian Peter Pazmany Catholic University made this studies obligate for all of its students. Yet, significance of this step is enormous considering number of victims and that racism is still an issue these days. It is planned that this programme launches at the year of 2017 with a goal to explore history and impact of the Holocaust. Quest for suitable candidate to fill this position is still on.





Institute for Cultural Relations Policy



<http://culturalrelations.org>