

"Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues"

Cultural Relations Policy

News and Background

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About CRP News & Background

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Pro-Russian unrest in Ukraine



Flag-map of claimed territory of the Lugansk People's Republic. Map: Wikimedia Commons

On September 1, 2014, Russian tanks forced the Ukrainian army out of the Luhansk airport which leads to a new wave in the six-month-long conflict. As a reaction, the European Union imposes more sanctions on Moscow.

Luhansk is near the eastern border of Ukraine, and it is approximately 160 kilometres from the city of Donetsk to the east. These are also the regions where

pro-Russian rebels have been in a series of success recently; capturing 680 soldiers according to a Ukrainian state news agency (UNIAN) and leaving cities in a damaged condition. The clashes between the troops at the Luhansk airport have been going on for the night, then the Ukrainian soldiers were forced to withdraw. To solve the crisis, Ukrainian and Russian representatives along with international monitors (such as OSCE) and rebel representatives met in Minsk, Belarus to negotiate about the case and put a ceasefire to the current unrest. Here, a rebel leader Vladimir Antyufeyev voiced that the complete withdrawal of Ukrainian troops would be a condition for peace. Rebels have suggested before that Ukraine grant a “special status” to the unstable regions; the suggestion was rejected as it would leave Ukraine economically as well as politically crippled. Instead, Ukraine's Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk spoke of rebuilding the borders between Ukraine and Russia as they have been porous and might have contributed to the smooth transition of troops and ammunition from Russia to Ukraine – although Russian President Vladimir Putin still denies that



Russian troops would be involved. However, albeit a ceasefire was reached during the negotiations, the conflict broke out again, resulting in at least ten deaths in its first wave mostly due to heavy shelling and rocket attacks. This puts the number of deaths over 3 000 since the beginning of the conflict in April.

The conflict put a final end to the EU-Russia strategic partnership which is now replaced by heavy sanctions from the European Union. In this international atmosphere, France has chosen to halt the delivery of two Mistral navy assault ships that can carry

up to sixteen helicopters. Albeit France has been pressured to stop them prior to this as well, it chose to respect the existing contract. The latest news apparently changed this stance – although Russian Defence Minister Yury Borisov accentuates the capabilities of the reformed Russian army with or without the ships. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko hopes for more from the United States; he emphasises the country's need for both non-lethal and lethal help – as he put it, “one cannot win the war with blankets”.



OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Photo: Flickr

EU-Ukraine Associate Agreement

The Agreement was signed Poroshenko and respective EU officials in June 2014, but in light of the latest events it has been ratified by the parties on 16 September 2014. The Agreement is supposed to improve Ukraine and align it to EU standards, and would cut down trade barriers which Russia opposes.



United Kingdom: better together?

“Should Scotland be an independent country?” was probably the main question Europe was looking upon in September and the biggest internal threat the United Kingdom was experiencing since the breakaway of Ireland.

YesScotland

The official logo of the Yes Scotland political campaign. Picture: Yesscotland.net

While the day of referendum was decided to be on September 18th, the “YES” and “NO” campaigns were active from the very beginning in agitating and promoting the advantages and disadvantages of each other. The tension was high as the main pollsters – YouGov, Panelbase, Survation, Opinium and ICM – were showing nearly equal numbers of independence and the union supporters.

While the Labour party turned to be the main opposition in 2014, not all members of it remained on the side of separation. The former prime minister of the United Kingdom and present Labour Party politician Gordon Brown expressed his support for voting “NO” at the upcoming referendum and a necessity “to stay as part of the United Kingdom for pensions, for

social security for funding out health service, for the currency, interest rates, the economy, defence and security”. In his speech at the Loanhead Miners Welfare and Social Club in Midlothian on September 8th, Mr. Brown also discussed possible powers the Scottish Parliament would obtain, particularly over finance, welfare, and taxation. The reaction of other Labour Party politicians on expanding powers expressed by Gordon Brown was not slow to arrive. The head of the pro-UK “Better Together” campaign and the British Labour Party politician Alistair Darling stressed out that: “[...] this is a referendum on whether or not we stay on the United Kingdom. It is not a referendum on what

bettertogether

Logo of Better Together 2012 Limited. Picture: Bettertogether.net

further powers we are going to get”. Former Scottish Labour Party chairman and present Labour for Independence campaigner Bob Thomson expressed a different opinion on proposed powers: “This smacks of utter panic and desperation by



the 'No' campaign as they lose their lead in the polls". The biggest supporter of Scottish Independence remains Alex Salmond, the First Minister of Scotland and the leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), and his appeals to disregard warnings from London: "Don't let them tell us we can't". Described as the "last-minute panic from Cameron and Osborne," political analysts stress out that the UK Government is sticking to the strategy of warning about the

promised by David Cameron and other political leaders in despair to keep it within the union. It is exactly rushed promises that created a disagreement within the "post-independence" political sphere. While the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg said it was time to let "communities, families, cities, towns and villages across the UK feel that they have more say over their destiny than is currently the case", conservative MP Owen Paterson claimed it was "completely

“Despite intense pro-independence campaigns initiated by the Scottish National Party, the UK remained united with 55.3 percent of the votes for the union and 44.7 percent for independence”

economic dangers of separation while it should be more focused on family and values. The stakes are high indeed. If Scotland decides to become independent, two countries would have to decide how to share the North Sea oil and what to do about Britain's main nuclear submarine base.

Despite intense pro-independence campaigns initiated by the Scottish National Party, the UK remained united with 55.3 percent of the votes for the union and 44.7 percent for independence. At the same time, the pro-independence campaign is not perceived as completely failed - it initiated the provision of greater powers and autonomy for Scotland as

unacceptable that right at the end of the campaign we have an ex-Labour leader (Gordon Brown) galloping off up to Scotland making some very rash promises of extensive new powers to the Scottish people”.

Meantime, the results of the referendum turned up a separate discussion England's voice and concerns. UKIP leader Nigel Farage announced: "we've heard a lot from Scotland. The tail can't continue wagging the dog any longer. We must have English MPs voting on English only matters". The chairman of the Conservative MPs' 1922 Committee Graham Brady is absolutely on Farage's side as proposed to let the parliament sit on different days of

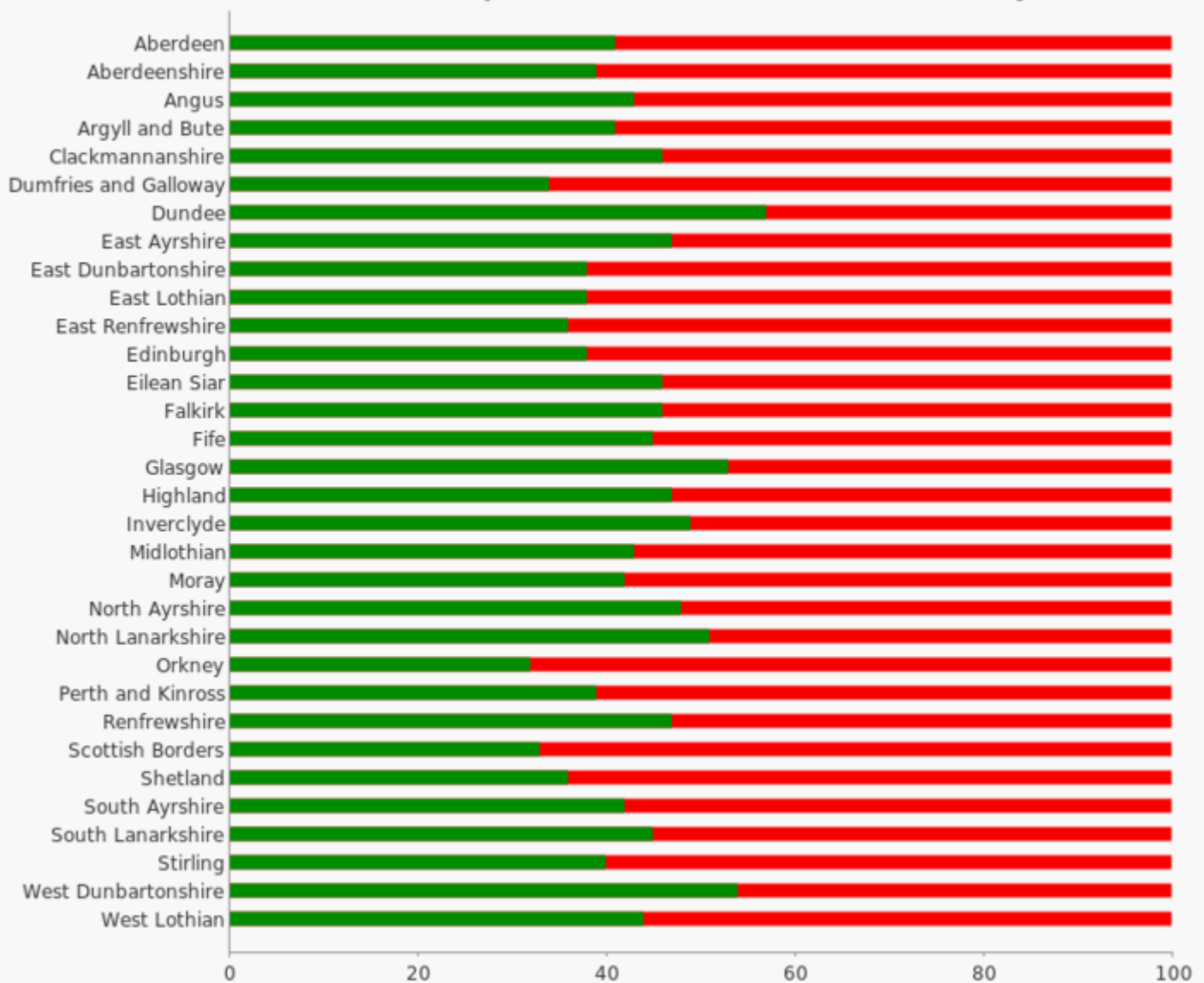


the week for different matters and introduce “English-only days” when English MPs would vote on English matters.

Few hours after Scotland voted to remain in the United Kingdom, Alex Salmond announced his decision to resign from the post of the SNP leaders and the First Minister

of Scotland. “I am immensely proud of the campaign that Yes Scotland fought and particularly of the 1.6 million voters who rallied to that cause. For me as leader my time is nearly over, but for Scotland the campaign continues and the dream shall never die,” Salmond told journalists.

Scottish independence referendum 2014 Results by Area



Scottish referendum results by area. Chart: Wikimedia Commons



Unsure alliances in Syria

The beginning of the month started with the bombardments of the city of Raqqa, Islamic State's stronghold, by Syrian warplanes killing 9 ISIS activists and 12 civilians on 6 September. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the major targets were the training camp, Islamic court, group's offices and a bakery run by Islamic State while Syrian State TV informs that army had destroyed ammunition and weapon stores of the IS troops in Raqqa.

As rebels continue to control much of the north and east of the country, Syrian government carried out air strikes of the Talbiseh area on 15 and 16 September targeting "a meeting of terrorists". On Wednesday 17 September, a governmental raid targeted the northern city of Aleppo killing 6 people.

While Western States seem to be unsure which side to support and started regarding the President Bashar al-Assad as "part of the problem", the Syrian three-year old war reached the frontier of an Israeli-controlled territory. At the end of August, Islamists overran a crossing point and captured peacekeeping UN forces demanding group's removal from the



Poster featuring Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Photo: Watchsmart [Flickr]

West's terrorist list. Two weeks later, however, all 45 kidnapped Fijian UN peacekeepers were released by al-Qaeda linked group Nusra Front and arrived to Israel.

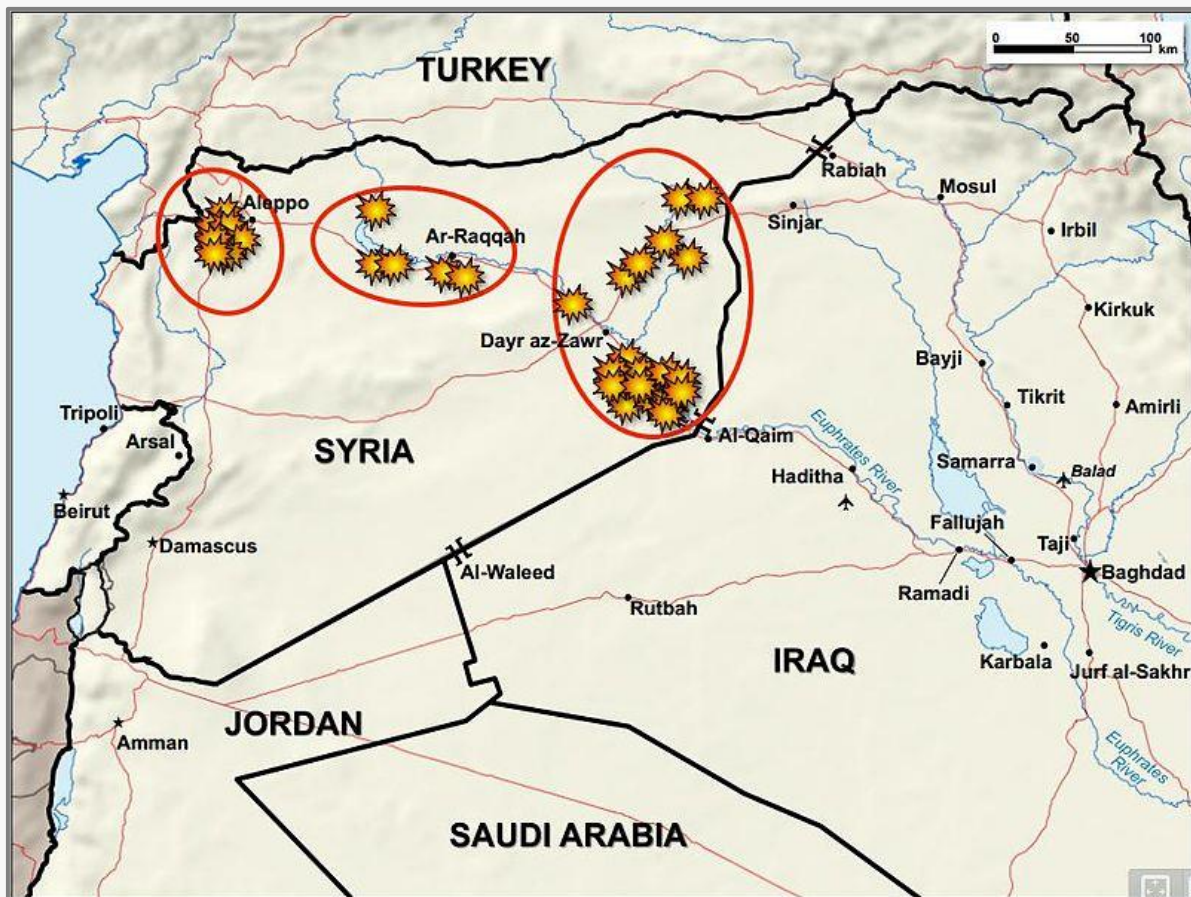
Western countries are not the only one who are uncertain about the status of Bashar al-Assad. On 26 September, over 20 Syrian rebel commanders together with Christian opposition groups signed an agreement to fight not only against ISIS, but also the President Bashar al-Assad's forces. Under the agreement moderated by the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs together the Washington based Syrian



Emergency Task Force and US Congressmen, moderate Muslim rebel groups fighting under the Supreme Military Council of Syria agreed to form an alliance with the predominantly Christian Syriac Military Council to assure country's inclusiveness of ethnic, religious and

political parties. The principal problems to deal with were identified as Assad, the gangs that support him and ISIS. Another issues the groups expressed their concern about were the air strikes that take away the lives of civilians.

“The principal problems to deal with were identified as Assad, the gangs that support him and ISIS”



Strikes in Syria and Iraq on September 23, 2014. Map: Defense.gov



ISIS under strike



FA-18C Fighter at the Iraqi airstrikes on August 7 2014. Photo: US Navy

Eleven years after the 2003 Iraq War, Western coalitions are preparing to strike on Iraq again in order to hit on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, commonly known by the abbreviations of ISIS.

France became the first ally of the United States in its mission against ISIS. Although President Francois Hollande did not elaborate on the means, his office released that France would not attack targets in Syria and would not go beyond supporting the Iraqi fighters with airstrikes. Meanwhile, the stance of the United Kingdom is similar: Britain contributed with six RAF Tornados voted by the overwhelming majority (524 to 43) of the Members of Parliament.

Decided on 14 September, 2014, Australia also released its support and cooperation in the counterterrorism operation to help Iraqi fighters against ISIS. As Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbot puts it, the heinous acts of ISIS mean a threat not only to the Middle

Earth, but to the world – Australia included – and so the intervention is justified. Further, he noted how the conflict has reached Australia as ISIS has been recruiting from the country as well. With this, Australia joins American President Barack Obama's initiative to “destroy” ISIS – to which mission the United States is ready to devote American contribution in the matter of both time and resources.

Nevertheless, the criticism of this project remains: the United Nations voiced its concern against the airstrikes, and although the U.S. launched airstrikes before, the latest campaign targets ISIS in Syria as well – an important location since this is where the headquarter of ISIS lies: in Raqqa, which was clearly in the focus of the attack. Whatever ISIS will respond to this initiative, it is relevant to note that by having a coalition against the Islamic State, its attention is now diverted to multiple countries. Many of them are – according to US Central Command – Sunni Arab countries, namely Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that either supported or participated in the strikes. This takes away – or at least softens – the Islamist group's focus on the United States, and brings a new change to the severe international conflict.



Videos of beheadings by ISIS

ISIS continues to record beheadings that make tensions between the Islamic State and the West even more uptight. People of American, British and French nationalities have been executed; the West has yet to give an adequate answer to this form of warfare.

The video of the beheading of James Foley – an American citizen and freelance journalist – appeared on the internet on 19 August. The masked speaker issued a threat to the United States: should they not cease to strike the Islamic State, another American journalist Steven Joel Sotloff, also a prisoner of ISIS, would be executed in the same manner. This threat was indeed fulfilled in a second video going viral on 2 September – despite a video message of Sotloff's mother who addressed ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi not to kill her son. Eleven days later a British aid worker David Haines was also executed, the video this time directed at British Prime Minister David Cameron in response to Britain promising ammunition support to the Kurdish fighters and military actions and against ISIS.

The executor was – according to analysts – the same person in each recording. It is noticeable from his accent, his posture, the



ISIS convoy near Baghdad. Photo: @albaraka_news

angle of how he holds the knife used, and even in his way of lacing his shoes. However, it has been also suggested that the executions were, in fact, not committed by this man himself as his attire and hands are clean after the act. Via the thorough observation of the videos, Britain and the FBI were able to identify the person. Nonetheless, neither Cameron nor FBI Chief James Comey provided further details.

Although the radical Islamist group carried out executions before, there is a new aspect to these individual beheadings that are recorded – according to some analysts, somewhat staged – in a particular structure. They are titled as messages and indeed they address leaders of Western nations, and the victims are forced to read



out loud a previously written script. The messages present the executions as a punishment for the military actions of the West as well as a threat – should the airstrikes continue. Clearly, these words read a wider audience than the addressed political figures: via the videos, ISIS manages to influence a large audience. According to terrorism analyst Paul Cruickshank, these videos might advance recruit as they “energize” those who identify with the goals of ISIS.

However, in the United States these videos may stir up harsh criticism rooted in fear. The official American response to the videos has been vague, although it has

been released that the United States is developing regional and international coalition. As such, voices from both Democrats and Republicans criticised a lack of clear strategy against ISIS; petitions demanded to save the lives of hostages. The domestic debate about American international military presence rose as well: Barack Obama has been questioned about the proportions of contributions within the international coalition – the US is carrying the majority of it both in military aspects as well as financially – and lack of measurable success results in scepticism from the public opinion.

“The messages present the executions as a punishment for the military actions of the West as well as a threat”

Iraqi insurgency

President Barack Obama announced aggressive military action against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and, more broadly, terrorism on 10 September. Emphasising lack of American troops on a foreign land, Obama laid out plans of relying on air power, military advisers, and the training of Syria's moderate rebels. Syrian leader Bashar Assad approves of airstrikes on ISIS within the Syrian borders as well; nevertheless, the American administration seeks more support in Syria.



Houthi protest in Yemen

September saw the escalation of conflict in Yemen – battles between army and Houthi rebels forced hundreds to flee their homes. Ceasefire talks collapsed on the 18th when Shia fighters began shelling the state television building as they advanced into the capital Sanaa; explosions were observed near the Interior Ministry. In only three days of clashes in Sanaa 123 people were killed. The fighting became so intense by the 19th that international flights were cancelled and the UN admitted they have failed to mediate a peace.

Houthis have been protesting for over a month demanding more political representation of the Houthis in the new Government and elimination of six-region federation in Yemen. After capturing the capital of the country, it was reported to be divided into two parts – one half run by Sunnis, the other half by Houthis who are supported by thousands of Shia fighters, military commanders and members of former regime. The situation could have become more dangerous and lead to a civil war if the Sunnis decided to join the fight against the Houthis.

The president of Yemen was facing a dilemma – first, he is from the south and the north of the country is controlled by the Houthis; second, the top military

commanders of army are Shias who might support Shia Houthi rebels if he calls for war; third, Sunnis might call for his resignation due to weak decisions.

The final decision the president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi took on 21 September was to sign an agreement with Shia Houthi rebels to end the political crisis within the country. Under the new agreement, a new government will be formed and the Houthis will nominate a new prime minister. However, the main challenge remains – will Sunni Islamist movement Islah (which has long confronted the Houthis) and the military commander General Ali Mohsen al-Almar accept the new order quietly? Will Houthi rebels leave Sanaa and give up the territory they have won in recent months?



Logo of the Houthis. Photo: Abdullah Sarhan



War on terrorism in Pakistan continues

Anti-government protests led by opposition leaders Imran Khan and Tahir ul-Qadri continued in September and intensified in its capital Islamabad where protesters managed to storm state TV headquarters. Demanding the overturn of the government of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, protesters continue clashes with police near many government buildings since mid-August. At this stage, the position

and tried to use it to attack US fleet in the Arabian Sea. Another attack was made on September 20th when the Pakistan's most dangerous militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban claimed to shutdown a Pakistani military aircraft and took the responsibility for a suicide bomb that killed American and NATO soldiers. A statement obtained by TheBlaze claims that Taliban consider "ISIS and every other mujahid group as our

“The bigger struggle the country faces at the moment is how to deal with India and Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US forces from the region”

of the military remains particularly important - while it insists it does not meddle in politics; it was known to be frustrated with the government and weakened Sharif.

The bigger struggle the country faces at the moment is how to deal with India and Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US forces from the region. Al-Qaeda already claimed its plans to spread its influence to Pakistan and India and showed its capability to strike Pakistan's security system. The violence escalates as South Asian wing already claimed its responsibility for seizing a Pakistani frigate PNS Zulfiqar

brothers.” The government of Pakistan continues to fight with extremists and conducted air strikes in North-Western areas of the country where over 20 militants are informed to be killed. Military report states that “five terrorists' hideouts were destroyed and 15 terrorists including foreigners were killed in Shawal area of North Waziristan Agency.” The gunfight happened at the Ghundi checkpoint in the Khyber tribal district which is considered to be a gateway for NATO supplies to Afghanistan.



Boko Haram threatens Nigeria's territorial integrity



Logo of Boko Haram. Picture: Wikimedia Commons

Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram remains a major threat to the country's domestic security, while President Goodluck Jonathan's administration faces massive criticism regarding their failure to contain insurgencies in remote, north-eastern parts of the state. Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau seems to have traded hit-and-run attacks for strategic warfare since he proclaimed the foundation of an Islamic caliphate in regions under their control in August. As Nigeria Security Network's Andrew Noakes commented on the matter in question, "Boko Haram are beginning to operate like a conventional army, a major change from... before July, when it focused on carrying out short-lived hit-and-run

assaults". After the recent seizure of Bama, local elders group Borno Elders Forum has warned that the security of the state's capital and Boko Haram's founding city Maiduguri might be in danger. Although defence ministry pointed out that "Security Arrangements for the Defence of Maiduguri has been upgraded to handle any planned attack", doubtful voices can be heard calling the attention to the fact, that the fall of Maiduguri would mean "a strategic and symbolic victory unparalleled so far in the conflict" for the insurgents. Thousands of refugees have already fled the region to Cameroon or Niger and the numbers are not yet expected to decrease. Fleeing the conflicted region does not guarantee safety as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



Boko Haram attack, April 2014. Photo: VOA



spokesman Adrian Edwards put it, “even upon arrival in Cameroon, they are not necessarily out of harm’s way.”

On the other side of the coin, partially changing style of combat does not mean, that the original terrorist attacks have gone out of Boko Haram’s routine. Recent suicide bombing and shooting at Kano Federal College of Education resulted in the death of 13 people apart from 34 who were taken to hospital with serious injuries. Local police

authorities said, that Western-style schools remain to be symbolic prime targets of the terrorists to manifest their disapproval and ignorance towards western values and culture. With the seizure of Michika, a gateway town to commercial hub Mubi and the increasing threat to Maiduguri, being already surrounded by Boko Haram’s insurgents, the present threat to Nigeria’s territorial integrity is unmatched since the 1967–70 civil war.

“Western-style schools remain to be symbolic prime targets of the terrorists to manifest their disapproval and ignorance towards western values and culture”

Boko Haram

As a militant organisation, Boko Haram has been active since 2009 in various states of Nigeria, particularly the north and northeast, although it was founded in 2002. It is mostly known for opposing Western education and modern science, but in the recent past it has also made a name for itself by various violent acts and taking control of regions of Nigeria in order to create an Islamic state. The most notorious actions they have taken was the attack of a UN headquarter in the capital, Abuja, or the kidnapping of 200 girls from their school; whereas the most recent is an attack on Maidiguri and its more than two million inhabitants. The city served as the birthplace of the organisation. One of the most effective methods used was suicide bombers targeting civilians and Western schools; a warfare characteristic to Boko Haram. Due to the poor defence of the military, the Federal Government of Nigeria and the President Goodluck Jonathan’s administration have been criticised as lacking “sufficient political will” to stop the attacks and help the refugees.



The battle for democracy started in Hong Kong?

On 22 September thousands of Hong Kong students from more than 20 universities gathered in front of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to protest against Beijing decision to restrict electoral reforms. The latter states that Beijing would nominate pre-screened candidates for the 2017 elections for the city's chief executive.

Boycotting students explain that the decision made by the National People's Congress "crushed the dreams of [those] who have been fighting hard for democracy for the past 30 years". A recent survey by the Chinese University revealed that an obscure political future would cause the leave of a fifth of the population. The last large scale emigration took place in 1997 right before Hong Kong was returned to Chinese rule. Back then, the country was promised a "one country, two systems" form of government.

By 25 September, student protesters progressed to the House of the Hong Kong Chief Executive and held a sit-in night protest. On 27 September, around 100 protesters stormed the government building and occupied the forecourt outside government headquarters while 74 were arrested. Meanwhile, boycotting university students were joined by secondary school students and the Occupy Central with

Peace and Love civil movement and, thus, turning into a mass sit-in. The OCPL movement were initially planning to occupy the financial district on 1 October but joined student protesters with claims to "stand up and have the courage to be a real Hong Kong citizen". Such a "coalition" made many students leave as the initial student movement was an independent action with "similar goals but different directions". Student protesters are also being joined by civic party leaders and pan-democrat lawmakers claiming "[...] all Hong Kongers who want their attitude known to the Communist party [should come] because this is a defining moment of Hong Kong". The Government remains uncompromising.



Student Boycott in Hong Kong. Photo: Michelle Lai Lai



■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Swedish general elections: Sweden's finance minister quits politics after elections

■ Sweden's well respected Finance Minister, Anders Borg quit politics the day after the centre-right government lost parliamentary elections. As the Finance Minister has also worked along Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt for two governmental terms, he was seen as a possible candidate to replace the Prime Minister in the Moderate Party, though Mr Borg stated that he has no intention of becoming the leader for the defeated Moderate Party.

Fatah-Hamas agreement

■ A unity government is about to take control of the Gaza Strip as Fatah and Hamas officials agreed in Cairo. The factions have already made an agreement about a national government, however a dispute over the non-payment of salaries of the public sectors' workers unsettled their relationship. Over two thousand Palestinians have been killed during the fight, along with a number of Israeli soldiers and a few civilians.

Philippine bill to give Muslims autonomy

■ The president of the Pilippines Benigno S. Aquino III introduced a draft law to the Congress that would allow the formation of a self-governed autonomous region in the south of the country. While the draft law derives from the October 2012 peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, such a step become a necessity now to end the long-lasting conflict between Muslim rebels and the government which already displace millions of people. Whether the agreement would bring any peace to the region remains a big question – a number of organization already claimed they would oppose the agreement in the Supreme Court as the creation of an autonomous Muslim state would directly violate Philippine sovereignty while the rebels promised to reject court's resolution if it decides to overrule the autonomy.



Religious hatred Sri Lanka

■ A hard-line, anti-Muslim Buddhist monk, Ashin Wirathu has been invited to join a Sri Lankan group to “protect” Buddhists. The monk has talked about Buddhists in his speech as an endangered, world minority, which needed to be saved. In order to do this, the monk’s organisation will work together with Sri Lanka’s Bodu Bala Sena, however he did not specify how exactly.

Australia raises terrorism threat level

■ Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced in the middle of September that the terrorism threat level had been raised to high in Australia after dozens of citizens – at least 60 people – had gone to the Middle East to join jihadist groups, like the ISIS or Jabhat al-Nusra. The government fears they will return to Australia as fighters worsening the domestic security because Abbott said they have “intelligence that there are people with the intent and capability to mount attacks here in Australia.” This raise means there will be more security at the airports, public events, ports and government buildings.

“The terrorism threat level had been raised to high in Australia after dozens of citizens – at least 60 people – had gone to the Middle East to join jihadist groups like the ISIS or Jabhat al-Nusra ”

New Zealand general elections

■ David Cunliffe has resigned from being the leader of New Zealand’s Labour Party after the centre-right National Party has won its third term in government. Prime Minister John Key praised the public for thinking that the country was on the right direction and therefore electing the party for another term with an outright majority. While the National Party could have made history by being able to govern on its own, the Prime Minister has expressed his intention to renew support agreements with three minor parties from the previous coalition.



■ News in Brief

Bilateral relations

Obama visits Estonia to reassure Baltic States ahead of NATO summit

■ President Obama visited Estonia only a day before the opening of the 2014 NATO Summit. In his speech, the President reassured the Baltic States that NATO will defend every one of its ally, should there be the need to do so, and therefore the countries will not lose their independence again. This was also a warning for Putin, emphasizing that according to Article 5, an armed attack against any state (in this case any state in the Baltic area) shall be considered as an attack against the whole NATO. He also emphasized, that nations have the right to determine their own future and while that's at stake in Ukraine, they will not let that happen to other states.

Demonstration against Vladimir Putin and War in Donbass

■ Thousands of people went on the streets in Moscow and other Russian cities to protest against Putin's Russia taking part in the Ukraine conflict – the country's first major anti-war rally since the fight has begun in Eastern Ukraine. Although a truce was agreed in early September, violations have still been reported since then and even though Putin denies it, Ukraine accuses Russia of sending troops across the border.

Chinese President Xi Jinping begins India visit

■ While disputes around several Himalayan border regions continue, the president of China Xi Jinping visited India in September to talk, as expected, on improvements in trade relations as well as increase of Chinese investments to billions of dollars. Despite a competition for regional dominance, China remains one of India's top trading partners and trade between two countries has amounted to nearly \$70bn a year. India's PM Narendra Modi particularly expressed his desire to reproduce China's manufacturing accomplishments in India: "the combination of the world's factory and the world's back office" will produce the most competitive production base and the most attractive consumer market.



■ News in Brief

International relations

NATO summit

■ The 26th NATO Summit was held between 4–5 September 2014. More than 60 world leaders attended the two day Summit in Wales at yet another critical time when global security environment was dangerous and unpredictable. Due to these facts, the main topics of the Summit were the following: NATO needs to be stronger and ready to face any challenge, the Ukrainian crisis and relations with Russia, NATO's longest combat mission in Afghanistan, deepening partnerships and last but not least, maintaining NATO's Open Door policy and the importance of the Transatlantic Bond and appropriate levels of defence spending. In his closing speech, David Cameron expressed his satisfaction with the results of those two days at the Summit with the following words: "So we leave Celtic Manor today united in purpose and with a stronger NATO better able to keep our people safe."



NATO Foreign Ministers' dinner at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, 4 September 2014.
Photo: Foreign and Commonwealth Office



Georgia's State Security Council is denies offering to host training centre for anti-IS fighters

■ On September 23, Foreign Policy reported that Georgia has offered to contribute to the anti-IS coalition by hosting training centre for Syrian rebels. But the State Security and Crisis Management Council denied it in a statement saying they support the coalition, but only by 'humanitarian missions'. They can also offer to share their experiences gained in combat missions but their participation is limited here. The statement also added "Georgia supports international efforts to fight terrorism and Georgia's participation in ISAF mission in Afghanistan is testimony to that".

United Nations votes in favour of LGBT rights

■ A resolution – that had been proposed in early September to the United Nations Human Rights Council – has been adopted on 26 September 2014. The resolution combats violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and has passed by a vote of 25-14, with seven abstentions. Most of the supportive states are in North and South America, Europe and Australia, while opposing states included Russia along with some African countries. During the conference, seven hostile amendments were proposed to the UN, however the Council has rejected them all before the final vote.

“The resolution combats violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and has passed by a vote of 25-14”

Ebola is still on the rise

■ As of the 29 September, there have been no confirmed cases of Ebola reported neither in the United States nor in Europe. On the other hand, the number of cases in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone is still on a rise, while Nigeria and Senegal seems to have stopped the expansion of the disease. Companies are trying to develop an Ebola vaccine, in which the United States takes a noticeable part in terms of funding these companies.





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