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and contemporary global issues”*

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The aftermath of the Brexit

Violetta Vaski ■

■ Since 23 June 2016, when Euroscepticism developing over the decades has led to a referendum resulting in the success of Brexiters, the political situation in the United Kingdom has been quite troubled. Indeed, it is difficult to swim against the stream.

leader of the UK Independence Party points out, that this way of slowing down the exiting process could result in public dissatisfaction: “I now fear that every attempt will be made to block or delay the triggering of Article 50. If this is so, they have no idea of the level of public



The High Court has currently declared, that the government cannot deliver implementation of Article 50 on its own, therefore MPs in the Parliament must vote to make it come into force. Prime Minister Theresa May says that MPs votes are not necessary to trigger Article 50, while she intends to stick to her plan meaning that negotiations would start in March, 2017. Nigel Paul Farage, who has resigned as

anger they will provoke.” The aim is to enable lawmakers of the Parliament to vote on the final negotiating strategy (“hard” or “soft” Brexit) and to represent the will of public. Despite of this, Theresa May and the government have expressed their worries about the approach, as having a detailed strategy could lower the chance of achieving the best possible deal during negotiations with the bloc. The decision



whether the government has to cooperate with the Parliament regarding the detailed strategy of Brexit is expected to be delivered next month.

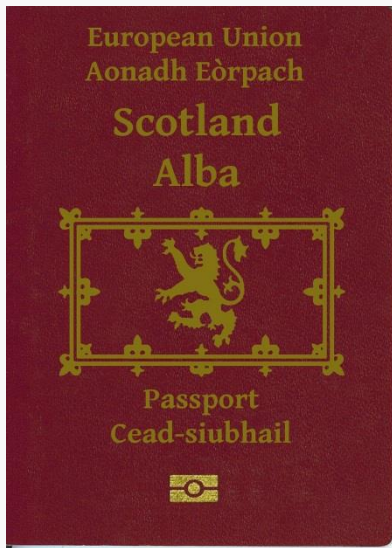


Image: Thomas Widmann [Elickr]

The whole UK is quite divided regarding attitude towards the possible outcomes. Scotland belongs one of the places expressing the biggest dissatisfaction concerning the issue. As the majority of people voted for remain, it is clear that the country would like to preserve strong ties with the European Union. According to the latest news, Holyrood officials already try to seek the possible options to figure out how Scotland can maintain its strong economic ties

with the European continent. If their plan is feasible, Scottish people would be able to work and live in the European Union, using a special Scottish passport. Academics have also counselled a potential way of enabling freedom of movement for citizens from the European Union. The government could provide a special national insurance number for people already living in Scotland and for those, who are planning to do. Scotland is being teared apart from the European Union despite its will, hence the Scottish Government is willing to investigate all the possible solutions to continue the freedom of movement in the next period.

Paul Nuttall elected as UKIP leader

On the 28th November 2016, Nigel Farage has passed the baton to former deputy leader Paul Nuttall in the leadership of the UK Independence Party. He has owned 63% of the votes, by defeating former deputy chairwoman Suzanne Evans and ex-soldier John Rees-Evans. According to the analysis of Norman Smith, BBC assistant political editor, Paul Nuttall is expected to serve the working class, being in contrast to previous leader Nigel Farage, who has served the will of Tory voters. As the new leader has announced, he is committed to support a “hard” Brexit.

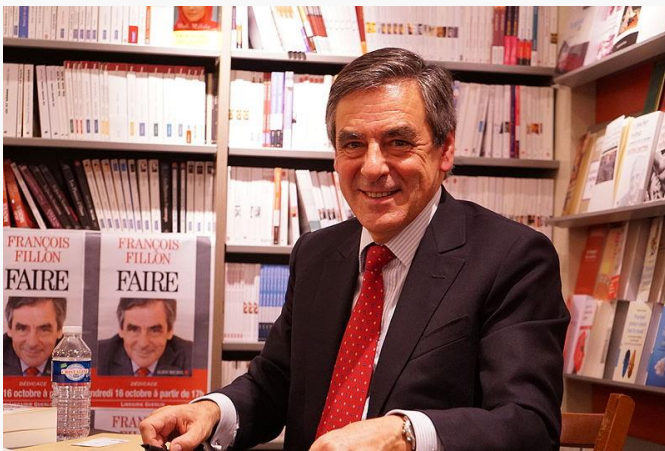
“the High Court has currently declared, that the government cannot deliver implementation of Article 50 on its own, therefore MPs in the Parliament must vote to make it come into force”



Presidential nomination of the “French Thatcher”

Edina Paleviq ■

■ François Fillon, who served as Prime Minister under Nicolas Sarkozy from 2007 to 2012, has won the presidential nomination for France’s most conservative party. He has long been the third man in a race between Sarkozy and Juppé, but in the end he received 66.5% of the vote and Juppé only 33%. The polling suggests Fillon’s will face Marine Le Pen in the presidential elections next May.



François Fillon. Photo: G. Garitan [Wikimedia Commons]

The former Prime Minister promised to enact radical “Thatcherite” economic reforms in France. He aims to end the 35-hour work week, cut public spending, abolish the wealth tax, reduce immigration and invest 12 billion euros in security, defense and justice. Fillon claims to stand for Christian family values and in 2013 he voted against same-sex marriage which came

into law under President Hollande. Furthermore he was campaigning against medically-assisted procreation for lesbian couples of single women and promised to uphold the principle that “a child is always the fruit of a father and mother”. He has also taken a hard line on immigration and Islam, saying that “the Islamic religion (must) accept what all the others have accepted in the past... that radicalism and provocation have no place here”. Moreover, he was a supporter of the temporary burkini-bans over the summer. Like the US President-elect Donald Trump, Fillon wants to renew the relations with Russia and also wants to form a Western coalition to fight ISIS with Russian President Vladimir Putin. To eliminate ISIS, he has also suggested siding with Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, saying: “I have no sympathy for Assad, but he is not going to disappear.”

Thierry de Ravinel, a lieutenant colonel in the French army voting in Evry, south of Paris, said: “We are in the same situation as Britain before Thatcher. We need a leader who is able to say no to unions and withstand boos and the storm. He represents people who are attached to French identity and want to work. I also think that a part of the Front National electorate is capable of voting Fillon.”



Erdogan threatens to open Turkey's borders to Europe as protest against EU

Deniz Horuz ■

■ Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan reacted to the decision of the European Parliament (EP) that recommended temporary suspension of the negotiations with Turkey for the refugee crisis. President Erdogan was referring to the agreement between Turkey and the European Union in which the bloc gives Turkey up to €6 billion (about \$6.3 billion) through 2018 in exchange for Turkish cooperation on keeping migrants from crossing into Europe. The agreement mandated an acceleration of talks on Turkey's joining the EU, which the European Parliament voted to suspend. While the vote was nonbinding, Erdogan made clear that he was angered by it. And then, he threatened that "if you go any further, these border gates will be opened. Neither me nor my people will be affected by these empty threats," Erdogan said at a women's justice congress in Istanbul on 25th of November, raising the rhetorical stakes with the EU. Erdogan said that the West needed Turkey because of the refugee crisis and that sanctions like this would not collapse Turkey. He also rhetorically asked whether "those which for 53 years have not opened the door to the European Union are sanctioning this country? What if they

were sanctioned? Is it over or over, or is it collapsing? We stood still. In the following 14 years, it is obvious where we brought Turkey from where we bought it" said Erdogan.

Some European countries did not find the threats of Erdogan useful. For examples, Ulrike Demmer, the spokesman of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, said the agreement is in the interest of all parties. "The threats of the parties are not useful." said Demmer. On the same line of thinking is the Dutch foreign minister Koenders who said that "the threat would not contribute to resolution of any issue."



Bridge on the Turkish-Greek border near Pythion.
Photo: Reinhard Dietrich [Wikimedia Commons]



OPEC agrees to cut oil production in historic agreement

Deniz Horuz ■

■ The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) decided to lower crude oil production for the first time in 2008 at the 171st ordinary meeting in Austrian capital Vienna that happened on 30 of December. With this development, oil prices rose more than 8 percent. OPEC members agreed to reduce their daily crude oil production by 1.2 billion barrels to 32 million barrels. The agreement will be valid for 6 months and may be reassessed in May 2017 and extended for another 6 months. The implementation of the agreement will be supervised by the Observer Committee, which is a member of Algeria, Kuwait, Venezuela and two non-OPEC nations.



Qatar Minister of Energy and Industry and OPEC Conference Chairman Muhammad bin Salih al-Seda announced the decisions at a press conference after the meeting: “This agreement foresees that major producer countries, which are not OPEC members, will reduce their crude oil production levels by 600,000 barrels per day. From these countries the Russian Federation reported that they agreed to go 300 thousand barrels per day.”

Representatives of OPEC members and non-member countries, including Russia, will meet again on 9 December at a meeting to be held in Qatar’s capital Doha. Furthermore, according to the agreement, the largest OPEC member, Saudi Arabia, will cut production by 486 thousand barrels per day, which presents the biggest cut in the oil production. Last but not least, Iran, which is given the privilege of exporting its production to the level earlier than the application of international embargoes, will be able to increase production up to 90 thousand per day. In the statement made by OPEC, we can say that the sole purpose is to ensure that the oil market reaches a permanent stability.



Myanmar wants ethnic cleansing of Rohingya?

Deniz Horuz ■

■ The UN accused the state of Myanmar of applying ethnic cleansing to the Muslim Rohingya minority. On 26 November 2016 a UN official said that Myanmar soldiers killed Rohingya minority men and raped their women in order to force them to immigrate to Bangladesh.



Myanmar: Displacement and discrimination continue to affect Rohingya.
Photo: Evangelos Petratos EU/ECHO [Flickr]

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, John McKissick, accused Myanmar of applying the ethnic cleansing to the Muslim Rohingya. McKissick explains that they have witnessed the torture and rape cases of thousands of Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh, saying that the number of the Rohingya who migrated is close to 30

thousand. In a statement to the BBC, McKissick, who served in the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Cox's Bazar in the border region of Bangladesh, said the soldiers killed the Rohingya, tortured the children, raped the women and burned the houses. According to the UN official, the purpose of these practices is to force the Rohingya to cross the river, which is the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that based on satellite images, they found that more houses were destroyed than Rohingya villages in Arakan. Myanmar authorities deny this claim, suggesting that the Rohingyas burned their own homes.

McKissick, who said that the Bangladesh administration has left unanswered calls to "open the border" to prevent humanitarian disaster, stated that Bangladesh is calling for Myanmar authorities to avoid crossing the border.

Myanmar's President Thein Sein denied these accusations and claimed it was a "scandal" campaign. Myanmar argues that the Rohingya minority is originally Bangladeshi. Although they have lived in the Arakanese region of Myanmar since generations, they do not recognise their citizenship.



South Korea sees largest protests against President Park Geun-hye

Deniz Horuz ■

■ The anger of the people in South Korea does not end against President Park Geun-hye who is accused of corruption. Tens of thousands of South Korean residents in the streets called her to resign. It is stated that the last demonstration had 150 thousand participants on 19 November 2016.

Those who supported the president as well as those who did not vote for the president were also in the streets. The number of the supporters of the president is about 11 thousand.

According to some sources, the scandal in the country is about that the President Park Geun-Park Geun-hye's close friend, Choi Soon-sil, was using his close ties with the president to reveal that the accused businessmen who did not have any official posts made donations for his foundation. It was also claimed that Choi Soon-sil, who was arrested at the beginning of November, was also connected with revealing of state secrets.

Although President Park Geun-hye apologised for what happened, South Koreans do not seem to take the apology lightly.

The scandal is said to have significantly reduce his potential voters before next year's general elections in South Korea. Some of the opposition

parties are also seeking for ways to get Park resigned. Surveys show Park's public support is down to 5 per cent after the scandal.



President Park Geun-hye. Photo: Korea.net [Wikimedia Commons]



Donald Trump wins US presidential election

Edina Paleviq ■



Donald Trump. Photo: Michael Candelori [Wikimedia Commons]

■ On November 8, with Donald Trump's victory, the long-awaited US presidential election has come to an end. While the United States remains the most influential country, this result will definitely bring some changes in the international arena and especially in the relations between the current three powers playing the so-called Great Game: the United States, Russia and China.

The post-Cold War relations between the United States and Russia were quite indifferent, but however, with Russia once again rising in the second decade of 21st century, "the relationship has been plagued by oscillations that often resemble the legacy of Cold War animosity". However after the election of Donald Trump as President it is obvious that the relations between Washington and the United States will

be facing a new stage. Russian President Vladimir Putin is a great supporter of Donald Trump and was one of the first world leaders to congratulate Trump on his victory. In an annual state of the nation speech, Putin has called for a new era of cooperation with the United States under Donald Trump's presidency.

Putin said Russia and the United States are "jointly responsible for international stability and security" and that a good relationship was in the interests of the "whole world." He said that Russia is ready for cooperation with the new administration. In his speech he added: "It's important to normalise and develop our bilateral ties on an equal and mutually beneficial basis. We share responsibility for ensuring global security and stability and strengthening the non-proliferation regime. [...] We hope to join efforts with the United States in the fight against a real rather than dreamt-up threat – global terrorism."

Trump has also indicated his intention to normalise relations between the United States and Russia. During his campaign Trump repeatedly expressed admiration for Russian president Vladimir Putin. He said he would "look at" lifting sanctions against Russia and recognising Crimea as part of Russia.



While the relations between the United States and Russia look set to move toward an optimistic path, the ties between the United States and China under Trump might take a different direction. Trump asserted a strong stance toward China, during his campaign, such as pledging to name China a “currency manipulator.” Apart from that, Trump as a businessman, might build a strong economic network with Central Asian states, and accordingly, he may observe the increasing economic involvement of China in Central Asia as a threat. Washington and Beijing need to work together more closely, as currently both have a shared interest in limiting terrorism in the region.

During his campaign, Donald Trump described NATO as “obsolete and expensive” and suggested America may not come to the aid of vulnerable NATO allies if they are attacked, even though the US is treaty-bound to do so.

After Trump's victory, perplexed foreign ministers from the European Union nations came together in Brussels, to try to assess the election of Donald Trump as US president. The European Union depends on the US cooperation not only for a set of European priorities, which Trump called into question during his campaign, but also the fundamental issue: American guarantees for Europe's security that have underpinned Western relations since World War II. Accordingly, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said that she was preparing the 28-nation bloc to stand more on its own on defence and security matters and “the European Union nations will be partners with the United States based on our own values, principles and interests”.

The world is waiting to see what policies the newly-elected superpower leader will implement in his new administration.



Fidel died, long live Cuba!

Csilla Morauszki ■

■ He had survived countless assassination attempts and had more premature obituaries than anyone in this world, yet Fidel Castro died on 25 November at the age of 90, after a long battle with diverticulitis.

Castro was born in 1926 and attended the School of Law of the University of Havana. It soon became obvious that he had a great affection to politics and public life. He turned to revolutionary politics as a young man and in 1950 he became a member of the reformist Cuban People's Party. When General Fulgencio Batista overthrew the government in 1952 and introduced dictatorship, Castro started to organise a rebel force. After two years in jail for a failed coup, he exiled to Mexico. He returned to Cuba in 1956 but he only assumed power on New Year's Day 1959. Castro had gained support from Cuban citizens on the basis of his promises to undertake moderate reforms, create a well-functioning and transparent administration and to restore full civil and political liberties. In contrast to these, he started to set up – considered by many – an even more radical communist system. The country has become a one-party state led by Castro who exercised control over almost all aspects of Cuban life through the Communist party, state security and government bureaucracy.

As for Cuba's international affairs, years of communism can be described by strong anti-American rhetoric and the decline of Cuban-American relations while ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union had become more and more important. The two countries made a trade agreement in February 1960 that further deepened American distrust. Later that year the US broke diplomatic relations with the island and placed an embargo on exports to Cuba. In 1962 the embargo was extended to include almost all imports as well.

Even though the embargo is still in place, US-Cuban relations have been dramatically changed in recent years after Fidel Castro had announced his health problems and stepped back from power in 2008. Cuba has been led by his brother, Raúl Castro since then, but Fidel never ceased to be a strong political actor and advisor.

He was certainly one of the world's most controversial leaders which fact is well proven by the division on how people have reacted to his death announcement. "This day, for me, is the most beautiful day of my life, the happiest day" said Felix Puentes, a Little Havana resident who spent six years as a political prisoner in Cuba before finally escaping to the United States more than a decade ago. While some people in Miami celebrated the death of el monstruo (the



monster) with flags and champagne, others in Havana gathered in groups on the streets crying and mourning.



The fence of the Cuban embassy in Buenos Aires after Castro's death.
Photo: Gastón Cuello [Wikimedia Commons]

Reactions of politicians were also mixed. President Obama issued condolences to the Castro family and offered “a hand of friendship to the Cuban people”. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau simply called Fidel Castro a longtime friend of Canada and his family. Pope Francis said the death of Fidel Castro was sad news, and that he was grieving and praying for his repose. At the same time, Presidential Candidate Donald Trump wrote on Twitter,

“Fidel Castro is dead!” and later issued a statement calling him a “brutal dictator.”

Cuba’s future after Fidel Castro’s death is unclear. The situation is even more complicated with the possible election of Donald Trump as US President. Trump had promised anti-Castro Republicans that he would roll back on President Obama’s detente, would keep the embargo on the island firmly in place and would even close the recently reopened US embassy in Havana. Whether it was just campaign rhetoric or serious political thoughts is still a matter of time to understand. One thing is sure: trade embargo can only be lifted by the US Congress, and Republicans, who will control both the Senate and the House of Representatives, have expressed their opposition to its removal.

With Fidel’s death, a long chapter of Cuba’s history has closed. Raul has said that he will step down in 2018. How his successor is selected will no doubt be a matter of close scrutiny, not just by the US Congress, but by the hundreds of thousands of Cuban diaspora. All of these mean that even more radical changes in Cuba are yet to come.



Propaganda poster with Fidel Castro in Pinar del Rio, Cuba. Photo: Krokodyl [Wikimedia Commons]



■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Rebels lost third of East Aleppo territory

■ Syrian Human Rights Watch Organisation stated that the Syrian army in Aleppo, had seized the Al Sakhour region, which has a strategic prefix in the east of the city. Furthermore, the rebels recently announced that they lost one-third of the area they were dominating. The Director of the Observation Organisation, Rami Abdulrahman said that, “this is the biggest defeat for the opposition in Aleppo since 2012. During the great progress of the opposition, one-third of the region it seized in Aleppo, was lost.” In a statement made on 28 November 2016 by the Syrian army, it was stated that the Al Sakhour region was reportedly taken over by the army and its allies. The passing of this region into the hands of the army raises the risk of dividing the area dominated by the rebels into two.

Iraqi troops recapture Nimrud from ISIS

■ Nimrud, a site of an ancient Assyrian city was under ISIS’s control for two years; in 2015 its archaeological sites were destroyed. According to UNESCO, this degree of destruction of national and cultural heritage is attributed to be a war of crime. Currently, the city have been retaken by Iraq military forces. The town was liberated through heavy fights, in which the enemy’s forces were damaged seriously. The Iraqi flag is now placed on Nimrud’s buildings.

Yemen’s Houthis form government in setback to peace process

■ The Houthi armed movement and its political allies formed on 28 November 2016, a new government in Yemen. This angered their Saudi-backed rivals and complicated United Nations efforts to end the conflict, which has lasted longer than two years in the country. Diplomats had hoped the Houthis, who control territory with more than half of Yemen’s population, including the capital Sanaa, would hold off on putting together a cabinet of their loyalists, and instead form a unity government with their Yemeni opposition, whom they pushed into Saudi exile. The Houthis said that forming a government with their allies did not mean abandoning the United Nations-sponsored peace process. There has been no immediate comment from the United Nations.

Gambian president warns opposition against protest

■ The President of Gambia, Yahya Jammeh has warned the opposition against protesting. He said that even peaceful demonstrations will not be permitted after the elections. Jammeh said there is no reason for demonstrating because their election system is fraud-proof, and cannot be rigged by protests. The President believes that demonstrations are the loopholes that



destabilising African governments. The registered voters (more than 880,000 people) will go to more than 1,400 polling stations and will be voting by putting marbles into 3 different coloured ballot drums, which will be counted right there on the spot. Yahya Jammeh's opponent is Adama Barrow, former businessman and the leader of United Democratic Party.

South Sudan accepts more UN peacekeepers under no conditions

■ In a statement made by the UN Secretary-General's spokesperson, retired Major General Patrick Cammaert, said that the issue for the people who want to live in South Sudan in July was presented to Secretary General of UN, Ban Ki-moon. The rapport on the violence in South Sudan in July said that UN peacekeepers could not receive effective protection measures against civilian attacks. It was emphasized that at least 73 people were killed in the violence that South Sudanese soldiers carried out in some civilian regions, including the UN camp in Juba, where some displaced persons were staying, and many civilians were wounded. A report on the request of the UN also stated that during these attacks, UN peacekeepers' attacks on civilians could not be prevented due to lack of effective leadership and preparedness and compatibility between the military and civilians, and civilians were exposed to violence and sexual assault. In a statement, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that he was saddened by the failure of the peacekeeping union. He noted that

the proposal taking place in the report will take the necessary steps to make the UN mission more effective and to bear the illusion.

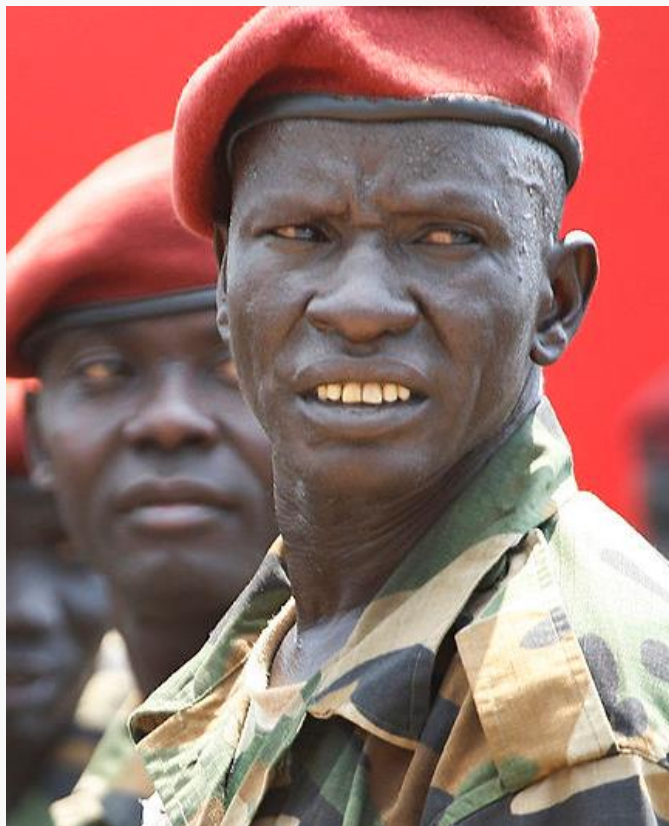


Photo: Steve Evans [Wikimedia Commons]

End of prosecutions for critical speech in Myanmar

■ By the November 2015 election of National League for Democracy, which was the country's first national vote since a nominally civilian government was introduced in 2011, among many hopes was also the one of freedom of speech. The expectation was that those who criticise or protest against the government would no longer need to fear being arrested. Yet Myanmar authorities continue to arrest and charge its citizens, including members of the ruling party, for criticising the military and the



government. Myo Yan Naung Thein, member of National League for Democracy, recently criticised the military in a Facebook post for “failing to defend the country” against attacks in Rakhine State. Under Myanmar Telecommunications Law he faces up to three years in prison. Section 66(d) of the law has in recent months been used very often by the authorities to arrest individuals, who criticised or defamed the party leader, the president or the military. It seems that the freedom of speech will remain illusory in Myanmar.



*Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta, Indonesia.
Photo: MichaelJLowe [Wikimedia Commons]*

Violent Muslim protest in Indonesia

■ Indonesia’s president, Joko Widodo had to postpone his visit to Australia due to a violent protest in Jakarta by thousands of hard-line Muslims. The protest, taking place around the presidential palace, was ought to be a peaceful one, but some demonstrators have acted violently towards the police, which had to use tear gas and water cannon to make people scatter. During the clashes, 12 people were wounded and an elderly person has died. The protestors were demonstrating their aim to prosecute Jakarta’s first non-Muslim governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama for insulting Muslim religion while campaigning in governorship elections. The police is investigating the issue, a blasphemy trial is expected to be delivered next month.

New peace deal from the government and the rebel group

■ A new peace agreement has announced by the FARC rebel group and the Colombian government six weeks after the original deal got rejected. They do not expect to put the new deal to a popular vote, but to submit it to the Congress. The two sides said they have reached a final agreement which includes changes, clarifications and new contributions from various social groups to end the armed conflict. Alvaro Uribe, former President said the new proposal did not go far enough. They added one requirement for the FARC to write a list of its assets so those can be used for victim compensation. Despite the rejection of the previous deal, President Juan Manuel Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his part in the negotiations.



■ News in Brief

Bilateral and international relations

Next steps for NATO

■ As a result of recent electoral events, the NATO members think that a greater military interoperability is necessary. During the electoral campaign, the president elect Donald Trump explained that if a NATO member does not spend enough on defence, that country will be responsible for its own defence. Hence Europe may have to take more responsibility for its own defence, even if the United States does not abandon completely its NATO allies. This means that Europe has to pool its resources, or in other words, greater interoperability.

Accused with spying and terrorism

■ Eight Indian diplomats had been accused of espionage and terrorism by Pakistan. The foreign ministry accused the embassy staff of fuelling instability in two Pakistani provinces and sabotaging their most vital economic project with China. It was not clear if the diplomats would be expelled by Pakistan or in better case withdrawn by India, however last week both countries expelled one diplomat from each other's embassies. More to that, the press wing of Pakistan's military said that India violated the ceasefire from 2003 178 times this year in Kashmir by killing 19 civilians.

Nuclear deal of India and Japan

■ Japan and India signed on the 11th November, 2016 an agreement for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The joint document signed by the two countries would provide the development of nuclear power projects in India and opens up the door for collaboration between the Japanese and Indian industries in their civil nuclear programme. The agreement will be beneficial for both countries, not only in the nuclear, but also in other strategic sectors. India will get its technological partnership and its much needed electricity and Japan a market for its companies.

China freezes bilateral diplomacy with Mongolia over Dalai Lama visit

■ Diplomatic ties between Mongolia and China are set for a freeze over the Dalai Lama's visit to Ulaanbaatar. Even though, the Mongolian authorities described it as a purely religious visit and no officials have met him publicly, the Dalai Lama's four-day visit (18-21 November 2016) provoked a sharp reaction from Beijing. The Buddhist country Mongolia reveres the Dalai Lama as a spiritual leader, whereas Beijing has declared him a dangerous separatist and warned the neighbouring country that the visit would harm their bilateral relations.





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