

"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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Race for the North Pole



Map of the Arctic Ocean. Map: CIA Factbook

Previously, the North Pole was hardly in the centre of attention: it was considered the land of ice and an uninviting area where no human life would be found save for the scientists who battle the harsh weather conditions for the sake of their research. However, lately it has grown into a more valued place: the US Geological Survey estimates that 22% of the world's undiscovered but recoverable oil and natural gas is to be found north of the Arctic Circle. Further, since global warming

poses more and more danger to the ice in the North, it has grown relevant to consider what shipping routes the area could offer. The race for the North Pole has grown more intense when Denmark filed its official claim on the North Pole as well.

The North Pole lies beyond every surrounding state's 200 nautical-mile limit, so the race is mostly about how much the countries can claim outside of this area. The countries involved are the US (via Alaska), Canada, Russia, and to an extent Norway. Denmark is a new figure in this case: although its claim might look shocking as Denmark is so close to the centre of Europe and is hardly an Arctic country. However, its autonomous area Greenland is more than close, and – to make Denmark's claim even stronger – it is argued that the rather important geological structure, the Lomonosov Ridge, is an extension of Greenland; the other countries also hope to see this ridge as their extension; Russia has run that far as to plant a titanium flag beneath the North Pole in 2007, which greatly angered the other participants, particularly Canada. The Lomonosov Ridge is an underwater ridge of continental crust that runs under the North



Pole. Every country agrees that the dispute will be settled within the convention of the United Nations (UN). Here, if the claim exceeds the 200 nautical-mile, the countries need to provide scientific data for the UN to consider. Albeit the significance of the North Pole had indeed grown, the intensity of the race is mostly due to the symbolism it means: it is rare to claim more territory in the 21st century and as such, it can have important influence on the country's domestic politics.



Polar bears near north pole. Photo: Chief Yeoman Alphonso Braggs, US-Navy



*Nuclear Submarines surfaced at the North Pole in 1986.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons*

Proposed independence of Greenland in 2021

2021 is the 300th anniversary of Denmark permanently colonising Greenland; as such, activists of Greenlandic self-government hope to see the island independent on that day. In 2008, the inhabitants already expressed a desire for self-government in a referendum which granted more freedom from Denmark and made the official language Greenlandic. It remains to be seen if this tendency continues to 2021.



Tracking jihadism

Since jihadism has been in the focus of the international discussions ever since 9/11, it is worth to take a look at how it has affected local communities and, consequently, the international perceptions on the Middle East. The following investigation has been done by the BBC World Service and King's College London, the gathered data is also from BBC sources. The results give a statistic overview on the jihadist attacks and how many lives they have taken in the November of 2014.

Geopolitically, the tragic results of jihadist activity are located in four countries that also serve as the nest of them: Iraq, Nigeria, Syria and Afghanistan. In Iraq's case, it was a military offensive carried out by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) that has been causing deaths, the country is described as the most dangerous out of the mentioned places; in Nigeria, it is the military organisation Boko Haram; the head-quarter of ISIS is found in Syria; and Afghanistan still struggles with the presence of al-Qaeda. These countries suffer 80% of the recorded jihadist attacks, and almost half of them are committed by ISIS. Aside from these countries, the Philippines, Somalia, Yemen are affected, but in their



'Flag of Jihad' showed during a protest in Rotterdam.
Photo: Wouter Engler

case it is less than 7% of their population that dies due to jihadism. The total number of victims is stated to be 5,042 in this month, but it differs from country to country whether they are civilians or not. In Nigeria, the actions of Boko Haram almost exclusively targets civilians (681 deaths), whereas in Syria and Afghanistan, the military personnel victims (372 in Syria, 285 in Afghanistan) were almost twice in numbers as non-combatants (151 in Syria, 123 in Afghanistan). The group responsible for the deaths is the ISIS in 44% of the case; 16% was committed by the Boko Haram and 14% of the Taliban – these numbers resonate with the geographical locations



of the jihadist activity as well. The most frequently used methods are shootings and bombings; particularly effective of these are suicide bombings. These are the ones that are responsible for the greatest number of deaths: minimum 3,227 lives (bombs and guns taken together).

In contrast, the more viral executions total at estimated 426 murdered people. The analysis of these numbers – according to scholars – shows that the used forces and methods of jihadist organisations are shaping into a more conventional strategy focused on holding territory rather than shadowy terrorist means. Similarly, the discourse of these groups is solely focusing

on their own war and ideology instead of on the religious aspect; they seek less legitimization from Islamic origins. Nevertheless, in their media presence they still aim to present themselves as religious organisations and often issue a call to “all Muslims”; however, multiple Muslim communities all over the world – but in the Middle East in particular – attempt to distance themselves from them. Muslim scholars describe jihadist organisations as malevolent distortions in open letters to the leader of ISIS; even non-Muslim scholars have described it as a modern phenomenon rather than a religious activity.

“The discourse of these groups is solely focusing on their own war and ideology instead of on the religious aspect”



An Israeli soldier stands near a poster of an Islamic Jihad operative suicide bomber. Photo: Israeli Defense Forces



Islamist insurgency in Nigeria

Boko Haram is struggling in Nigeria and Cameroon to defeat the hated Western education, in order to create an Islamic State under the precepts of Sunni Islam.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a federal constitutional republic of thirty-six states. It is located in the Western part of Africa, and since the beginning of the 20th century was a British colony. Only in 1960, Nigeria obtained the complete independence. Nonetheless, for decades it was ruled by military dictatorships. Finally, in 1999, democracy was established.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with its 174 millions of inhabitants. Notwithstanding the ethnic differences among the population of the states, the main element of diversity is determined by religion: the Northern regions of the country are mainly Islamists, and the Southern regions are mainly Christians.

The Islamist movements attempted many times to change the Nigerian political environment throughout the years, but they were always repressed by the military dictatorships.

With the advent of democracy, the situation has changed: the Islamist groups have found a fertile ground for their

objectives. This statement is confirmed by the success of Boko Haram within the country in the last few years, and internationally by the success of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

What journalists usually call Boko Haram, that literally means "Western education is forbidden", is an Islamist terrorist group based in the Northeast of Nigeria, but active also in Chad, Niger and Northern Cameroon. The movement is officially called Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, "Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad", and led by Abubakar Shekau.

Founded in 2002 in Maiduguri by Mohammed Yusuf, the group had the



A women's school in Nigeria. Photo: UK Department for International Development



objectives of creating an Islamic state and becoming a recruiting ground for jihadists. Nonetheless, at the beginning, they started with a complex of religious schools for poor Muslim families.

The radicalisation occurred in 2009, with the execution of the leader, perceived as unreliable, and the alliance with al Qaeda. From the July of 2009 to the June of 2014, Boko Haram killed more than 5,000 civilians, and forced more than 1.5 million people to fly away from the conflict zone. The most known episode to the European and American public opinion, is probably the kidnapping of the 276 schoolgirls from

The last month is a war chronicle of the horrible deeds committed by the Nigerian Islamist group to the populations of the different countries they are operating in.

In the north-eastern cities of Nigeria there were reports of dozens of suicide bombings. At least 77 people were killed during the attacks, and this led to an utter increase of the figure of the deaths of the last week: 247 only in Nigeria. Moreover, two young women blow up at the market in Jos, killing more than 70 people. Another terrorist attack to a market was conducted through a double suicide bombing in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state and the city of Boko

“From the July of 2009 to the June of 2014 Boko Haram killed more than 5,000 civilians, and forced more than 1.5 million people to fly away from the conflict zone”

Chibok in the April of 2014. The kidnap was followed by the international support of many politicians, actors and journalists that launched through Twitter the hashtag #bringbackourgirls. Notwithstanding the great mediatic effort, the girls were never brought back: most of them were killed, some others became wives of the Boko Haram's militiamen.

The mediatic and military success of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria pushed Boko Haram to pursue an ideal alliance with ISIS. The groups started to influence each other in strategies and methods. Boko Haram adopted IS' emblems and terminologies.

Haram's headquarters, killing 16 people. The murders continued in the Gumsuri village, in the north-eastern Nigeria, 43 miles from Maiduguri. In this attack 33 people were killed, and 200 were kidnapped. This is the most relevant episode since Chibok.

Nigerian police results to be highly unprepared to face the problem. Indeed, in Damaturu, the Yobe state capital, were found 33 corpses of police officers, along with six soldiers and 20 Boko Haram's members.

The Nigerian military forces made no exception. In fact, 54 soldiers were convicted to death sentence by the court



martial for mutiny when they refused to fight back the terrorist forces in the cities under Boko Haram's control. They claimed not to have the proper weapons, necessary to defeat the Islamist militia.

At the opposite, just recently, Cameroon's army declared the death of 116 Nigerian militants that attacked one of its bases.

Also Cameroon has been under Boko Haram's strikes in the last few weeks, especially after the dismantling of one of their training camp in its territory. Mbaljuel, a village near the border with Nigeria, was attacked, and 30 civilians died. A second attack was conducted against Waza-Mora, and a Cameroonian soldier was killed.

The Cameroonian reaction was strong. Indeed, through airstrikes conducted on



A Cameroon army paratrooper. Photo: SPC Brady Pritchett

one Boko Haram's camp in Soueram, they managed to kill 53 militants.

The war in the area is making more and more victims and the legitimate institutions are too weak to react, but, at least for now, the international forces have no intention to intervene.



Cameroon army chief explaining different techniques to the soldiers. Photo: defenseimagery.mil



War in Somalia continues



Burundi peacekeepers prepare for next rotation to Somalia. Picture: US Army Africa

Since the overthrow of President Siad Barre in 1991, various armed groups have been battling for control of Somalia. Currently al-Shabaab Islamist Militants remain the most active and violent terrorist group within Somalia. Linked to al-Qaeda, the al-Shabaab militants fight to overthrow the UN-backed Somali government and frequently attack government targets as well as neighbouring countries providing troops to the African Union force. Currently AU troops comprise 22 000 soldiers from Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. The aim of the attacks is explained as to target “foreign mercenaries” who prevent the rule of the Sharia Law within the country. Called

“Kenyan crusaders”, Somali Islamists claimed to be “uncompromising in [their] beliefs and ruthless against the disbelievers to defend [their] Muslim brethren suffering from Kenya’s aggression.”

The neighbouring Kenya became one of the first targets of the Islamists who killed 36 non-Muslim workers in the north of the country to persuade Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta to withdraw the troops from neighbouring Somalia and stop fighting the militants. The attack happened in the same area where a hijacked bus at the end of October killed 28 passengers. Witnesses reported that non-Muslim workers were separated from Muslims and shot in the head. As a result, hundreds of people fled to army bases from the north-eastern province of Mandera bordering with Somalia. Police chief David Kimaiyo resigned. Although supported by Britain and the US, Kenya’s security services remain poorly coordinated while the opposition constantly requires the withdrawal of troops from Somalia to prevent further deaths within Kenya.

Kenya, however, is not the only poorly coordinated country fighting the al-Shabaab Islamist Militants. Constant attacks



on civilians and government targets caused death of hundreds of people. On December 3, a car exploded next to a UN convoy in Somalia's capital of Mogadishu with the second blast targeting the African Union in the Lafole village in the south of the capital, at least 6 people were killed. On December 5, only days after Somalia elected new leader Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, another attack took place in Baidoa restaurant where a suicide bombing attack killed 10 people. While no group claimed responsibility for the latter terrorist attack, the al-Shabaab Islamists attacked the main base of the African Union (AU) in Mogadishu on December 25. With the



US marine training Ugandan forces. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

support of the United States and continuous air strikes, al-Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane was killed in September. Success of the US air strikes was proved once again when the intelligence chief Abdishakur was killed in Saakow in Somalia and a string of areas in Hiran region of Central Somalia was liberated with the cooperation of Somalia forces and food was delivered to the blocked for 10 months Bulo Barde. Since then, disputes among members and their loyalty to the previous leader made another top militant Zakariya Hersi surrender to police in the Gedo region.

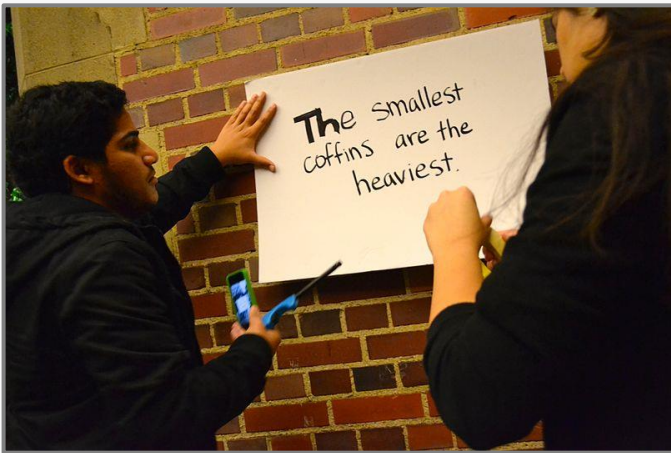


Ugandan forces train to serve in Somalia. Photo: 1st Lt. Herman Davis

“Only days after Somalia elected new leader Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, another attack took place in Baidoa restaurant where a suicide bombing attack killed 10 people”



Peshawar school massacre



Reaction to the 2014 Peshawar school attack. Photo: Neon Tommy

The war in North-West Pakistan is going on since 2004 resulting in the death of more than 2,100 people so far. On December 16 the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan militant group launched attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. The terrorist attack was claimed to be the revenge for Operation Zarb-e-Azb conducted by the Pakistani military in June.

The attack on the school was carried out by seven gunmen of the Islamic military group dressed as members of the Frontier Corps, the Pakistani paramilitary force. They opened fire on the children gathered in the auditorium. There were around 1,100 people in the school building at the time of the attack; the students were aged

between eight and eighteen. Most of the students tried to escape through the two exits on the opposite side of the hall. The attackers did not intend to take any hostages the aim was to shoot as many children as they could, commented Major-General Asim Bajwa, Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations, the public relations department of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

The Special Services Group managed to get to the school within fifteen minutes and started the rescue. With the sudden intervention the SSG forced the seven terrorist to retreat to the administration block of the complex this way preventing them from killing more students. One of the



Candlelight vigil in London for the victims. Photo: Kashif Haque



attackers was shot while escaping from the auditorium the others managed to take hostages with them. By this time the building was surrounded by the military personnel and they started to empty the school. The snipers managed to shoot down three of the terrorists then the commandos rushed inside and killed the remaining three attackers. The attack left 145 people dead, 132 of them were boys attending the school, another 10 were staff members and three soldiers also lost their lives. There were also 114 people who suffered injuries, including seven commandos. The Peshawar school massacre was the deadliest terrorist attack in Pakistan that has ever happened. The



Flag of Tehrik-i-Taliban. Picture: Wikimedia Commons

attack evoked the condemnation of both the Pakistani society and authorities, and the international community. The incident caused renewal of the actions taken against militant groups, the TTP above all.



Candle march against Peshwar attacks in Ambala, India. Photo: Owais Khursheed



Violence in Assam

Assam, a state of India in the north-east, has seen an unexpected series of attacks in December 2014. The attacks have an ethnic trait: they have been committed by indigenous people in the region called Bodo who are targeting non-Bodo people in their assaults.

The series are a part of an insurgency in northeast India that has always been a

Assam and is classified as a terrorist organisation by the Indian government.

It is not the first time the NDFB targets non-Bodo people (that are often descendants on British colonial labourers) and migrants. This time, they killed approximately 65 people in three districts of Assam on 23 December 2014: most of the people were Christians in preparations for Christmas.

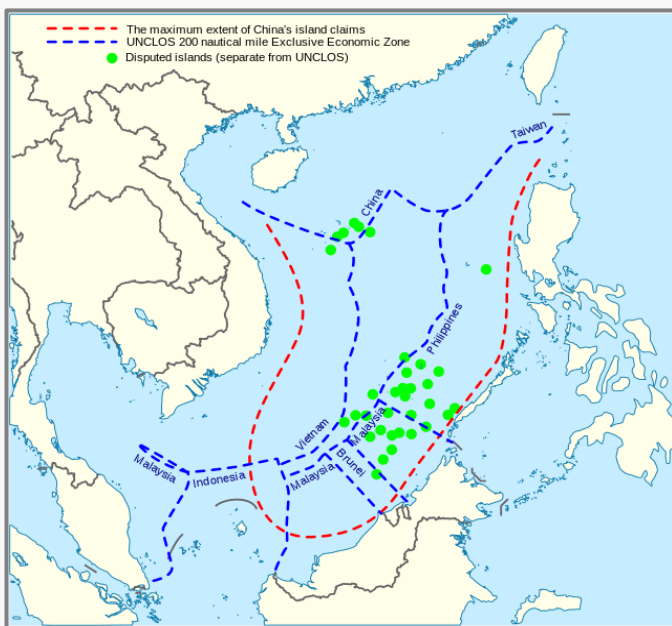
“The attacks have an ethnic trait: they have been committed by indigenous people in the region called Bodo who are targeting non-Bodo people in their assaults”

critical region, but after an offensive carried out by the Indian government it has flared up again in 2014. Assam in particular shares porous borders with Bangladesh and Bhutan. In this region, the native people are the Bodo whose struggle for self-determination goes back to the 1960s. Its most radical form is the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) that hopes to establish a sovereign Bodoland in

In response, the non-Bodo people had a protest on the following day which then turned violent and resulted in three Bodo deaths. As the violence escalated, both sides burnt down villages and the conflict spread to other districts of Assam as well. Ultimately, on 26 December 2014 the Indian government launched an “Operation All Out” to capture the estimated 80 remaining Bodo militants.



China, Vietnam and the Philippines collide over South China Sea claims



Maritime claims in the South China Sea. Map: Wikimedia Commons

The tension in the South China Sea region has been growing in the recent years. The area is rich in gas, oil and fish therefore it is the object for a lengthy dispute between the surrounding countries. China refuses the claims of Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei regarding parts of the territory of the South China Sea.

In this matter there is an on-going case of the Philippines versus China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. The question before the court is the validity of the “nine-dash-line” and the

interpretation and application of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. China disapproves of the trial. According to standpoint of the Chinese foreign ministry “Its underlying goal is not ... to seek peaceful resolution of the South China Sea issue, but rather, by resorting to arbitration, to put political pressure on China, so as to deny China's lawful rights in the South China Sea through the so-called ‘interpretation or application’ of the Convention”. Xu Hong, head of the ministry's legal and treaties department also commented on the issue: “The Philippines is keenly aware of the importance of addressing the issue through peaceful negotiations. But it still unilaterally initiated a compulsory dispute settlement procedure. Of course China cannot accept this.” China got until December 15 to reply in the case after it refused to participate in the arbitration in a position paper issued on December 7.

The refusal was submitted after Vietnam issued its viewpoint to the PCA although China claimed it had been preparing the paper and its contents for a long time. Vietnam requested the court to take into consideration the legal rights and interests



it has in the area of the dispute. The paper also contains the refutation of the Chinese claims to the Paracel and Spratly islands. The submission was reported by the South China Morning Post to be made on December 5 although the foreign ministry did not mention it. This action of Vietnam worsened the situation. China insists on its sovereignty over the Spratly islands being beyond dispute whereas Vietnam is stating that it has sovereignty based on “sufficient historical evidence and legal ground”. A resigned professor of the Australian Defence Force Academy, Carlyle Thayer expressed his opinion on the submission of Vietnam; he assumed that Vietnam wants

to avoid being omitted from the debate and it wants to assure that its interests are protected as well. As regards the Philippines Vietnam rather stays behind it evading the direct anger of China.

Although the dispute involves many states of the region mostly only the Philippines and Vietnam are standing up for their interests against China. The case is not yet decided but given the court rules in favour of the Philippines it would considerably hinder the Chinese claims to the territories of South China Sea. The settlement takes a lot of time and patience from the parties but so far every party is aiming at solving the debate in a peaceful, diplomatic way.



Sunset on the South China Sea. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The nine-dash line

The nine-dash line, also known as nine-dotted line, or U-shaped line illustrates the claims of China in the South China Sea issued in 1947. The dashes depict the largest area of the Chinese claim without demarking the possible borders between the dashes. Formerly the map consisted of eleven dashes, but two of them were removed in order to successfully reach an agreement with Vietnam about the territory of the Gulf of Tonkin. This year a tenth dash was integrated into the nine-dash line to the east of Taiwan.



Protests in Hong Kong are coming to an end

Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in 1997, maintaining a different political and judiciary system from the mainland. Nonetheless, since that moment the Chinese political pressure over the city grew up strong.

In September 2014 the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) proposed a strict reform for the Hong Kong's political system. In particular, the reform would have established a control of the Communist Party over the candidates allowed to participate in the city's elections.

Hong Kong was a British colony, and for a long time enjoyed its autonomy. Therefore, such reforms that would largely limit the freedom of its citizens are highly opposed.



Police forces during the revolution. Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Umbrella Revolution in Causeway Bay. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Indeed, it is two months now, that the protest of the city's citizenship is shaking both the People's Republic of China and the Western public opinion.

The protest got the name of Umbrella Revolution. The strikes began on the 22nd of September, led especially by the Hong Kong Federation of Students and Scholarism. The students, through peaceful manifestations occupied the main streets and squares of the city, asking for a confrontation with the Chinese authority. Nevertheless, the police and the Chinese authority reactions have been hostile. The "West" was also accused of instigating the protests. The police has become more and more effective in clearing the sites of



occupations. Just recently they were able to break the siege of the government offices. The protesters were equipped with goggles and gas masks, in order not to be hurt by the pepper sprays. Nonetheless, the increasing aggressivity of the police force, and the passing of time without concrete results has weakened the strength of the Umbrella movement. The street camp in the Mong Kok neighbourhood was dismantled and 40 people were arrested. The Admiralty camp resisted only a few days longer, with an arrest of over 250 people. This was the biggest protest site.

The last site protest was dismantled just recently, in the Causeway Bay Occupy Area. Anyway, the protesters seem not to have intention to give up the cause, leaving images of umbrellas and signs of the fact that they will come back. The Chinese authority has the firm intention to apply the reform for the new Hong Kong elections and not to listen the protests. Meanwhile, many demonstrators are happy they have been able to send a message. Maybe they have not been able to win the battle, but the war for democracy is far from over.



Daily Tweets circulation and comparison between different forms of Umbrella Revolution, Umbrella Movement and Occupy Central 24/09 - 07/10.
 Chart: <http://topsy.com/analytics>



■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Arrested media outlets in Turkey

■ On 14 December 2014, police in Turkey arrests 24 supporters of Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen who has chosen exile in the US as a protest against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The EU, the US and several voices within Turkey raised critical voices against the violation on the freedom of press. Erdogan accuses Gülen with fuelling the tensions; Gülen denies it and criticises Erdogan's increasing authoritarianism.

Arrest warrant for rival of Turkish president

■ Despite living in a self-imposed exile, Fethullah Gülen is still influential in Turkish politics. He fled after accused with a coup, although they were dropped in 2006. Now the Turkish court issues an arrest warrant against him for indictment, despite the fact that he cannot be compelled due to living abroad. The arrest warrant is seen as Erdogan's operation to abolish Gülen's supporters.

“The arrest warrant is seen as Erdogan's operation to abolish Gülen's supporters”

Battle for Wadi Deif

■ The Wadi al-Deif military base is located next to the main north-south highway in Syria. A group of Islamic insurgents with members of the Syria wing of al Qaeda, the Nusra Front among them occupied the base on December 15. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group there were around a hundred Syrian soldiers and eighty insurgents who died during the two-day fight. The regional conflict that started as a pro-democracy movement then turned into a war resulted in the death of about 200,000 people, estimated by the United Nations.



■ News in Brief

Bilateral relations

India and Russia signed an agreement on defence and energy

■ On the 11th of December, the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had an important one day summit in New Delhi. The two countries signed for deals of billions of dollars in the sector of energy and defence. Rosatom will build twelve nuclear reactors, and Rosneft and Essar Oil agreed for a ten years supply. Modi himself stated that even if there was a differentiation among the partners, Russia still remains the first Indian contractor in the defence sector. During the visit, within the Putin's delegation, there was also the Crimean leader, while the tensions in Europe have not decreased.

The United States and Cuba restore diplomatic relations

■ United States President Barack Obama has announced that the country will restore diplomatic relations with Cuba, reopen embassies closed since 1961 and to ease restrictions on remittances, travel and also, on banking relations regarding Cuba. According to the President, isolation has not helped to promote human rights in Cuba, on the other hand, it isolated the United States. The negotiations were encouraged by Pope Francis, were hosted in Canada and took over 18 months to complete.



*President Barack Obama with Pope Francis at the Vatican in March 2014.
Photo: Official White House Photo by Pete Souza*



■ News in Brief

International relations

Herman Van Rompuy leaves EU stage

■ Former Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk becomes President of the European Council on 1 December, 2014 after Herman Van Rompuy has finished his second term. Although Van Rompuy was often criticized for wasting time and money or for not caring about protocol details, he did achieve a lot starting in office from scratch – for example managing to secure a deal on the EU budget after months of quarrels among leaders.

Transparency International issues 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index

■ According to the newly issued Corruption Perception Index carried out by Transparency International, more than two-thirds of the surveyed 175 countries performed poorly, scoring less than 50%. The least corrupt country is said to be Denmark (followed by New Zealand and the Nordic countries), while North Korea and Somalia scored lowest, becoming the most corrupt countries. China had the biggest fall dropping 20 places in the index despite the government's anti-corruption campaign.

Hamas removed from EU's list of terrorist organizations

■ The European Union has at first only banned Hamas' military wing in 2002 and after a series of suicide bombings put the whole organization on the list in 2003. Seven years later, in 2010, Hamas appealed its terror designation with claims including that as a legitimately-elected government it cannot be labelled as a terrorist organization. The EU General Court has accepted the organization's argument and removed Hamas from its list of terrorist organizations on 17 December, 2014.

Anti-Islamic protests in Germany

■ A group called Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West, PEGIDA, has shaken Germany with its protest in the last few weeks. The group had its last manifestation in Dresden, with more than 10,000 participants. The weeks before the protest reached the figure of 9,000 according to the police data. The group is manifesting against the Islamic extremism, but has obtained the support of the far-right parties and the Neo-Nazis. The situation has worsened with the growing figure of Syrian refugees within the country. Chancellor Angela Merkel warned not to support the far-right rhetoric





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