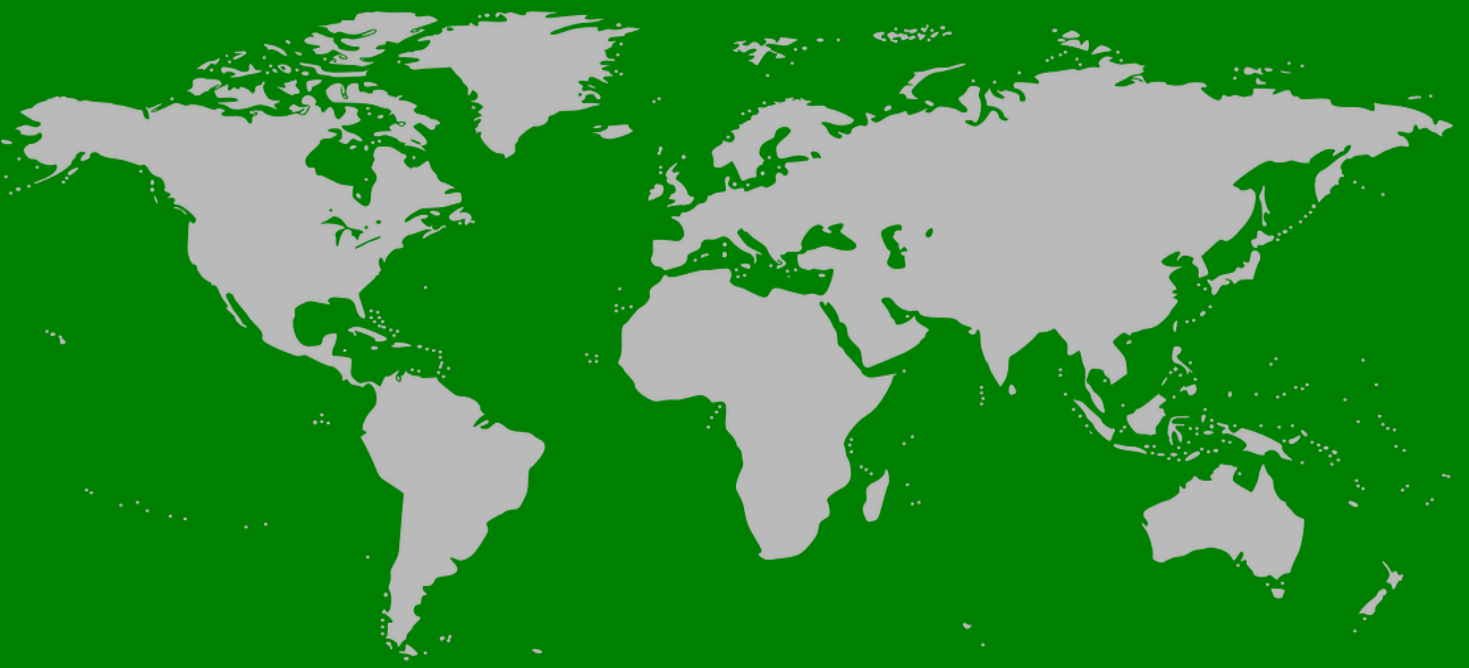


*“Discovering international relations  
and contemporary global issues”*

# Cultural Relations Policy News & Background



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## About CRP News & Background

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

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## The Global Scenario for 2017: new protagonists and awaited shifts for the upcoming year

Raphael Pinciara ■

■ 2016 has come and gone, and now it is time to think what will drive the international conversation in 2017. If the entire world had looked to the United States as a guarantor of world order since the Second World War, this year comes with expectations around how the world responds to President Donald Trump. As a clearly defining feature over the coming year, the prospect behaviour of the world's superpower makes US-Russia and US-China relations come roaring back to centre stage, yet changes in the liberal international order may sound implausible.

2017 also pleases the ninth Secretary General of United Nations. The former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, replaces Ban Ki-moon with overwhelming backing among the member states. While the crisis in Syria and South Sudan will dominate his agenda, the UN attention must not dismiss its key accomplishments as the Paris Agreement.

The African Union also will have a new chairperson for 2017. The election takes place in January, in a year supposed to place significant shifts in the whole continent. As long Africa is far away from its 2063 agenda, the person at the helm of the AU have to steer the continent towards peace and push for more representation in international organisations.

Keeping in Africa, the announcement of Burundi and South Africa about leaving the International Criminal Court could represent a trend that may be irreversible. While ICC's latest reports star Afghanistan, Colombia, and the Philippines, the singular focus on African conflicts suggests the first break in the cycle of the world's only permanent international court.

The political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo also makes Africa remains as a key region to watch in 2017. With elections delayed, President Joseph Kabila does not seems to step down for the democratic calls. Continuing to lose credibility among the Congolese, resistance and political instability is expected through the country.

Given those points, all the vicissitudes of international politics, as the implications of overreacting to terrorism, and new threats as cyberwar, will also catch even more attention in the next year. For the Western nations, more effective counterterrorism strategy and cybersecurity will protagonise the foreign policy strategies. On the side of the human rights agenda and the rise of populism all around the world, the puzzle for international affairs for 2017 brings shifts that cannot be told in advance, but the eventful 2016 shows that we can predict unexpectations.



## Prospects on global economy in 2017

**Debóra Kovács** ■

■ Global economy growths shall expand their percentages in the upcoming year. Major economies are working on their wealth and resources to stabilise and make the regions grow economically.

2016 was economically very challenging for the world's countries. These hindering factors were for example efforts to reduce overcapacity, natural disasters and of course geopolitical events such as Brexit, the ongoing civil war in Syria and last but not least the potential policy changes in the US and in a number of other major economies. Overall data showed that the global economy grew 2.6% and remained on that last year.

The biggest focus is on China right now. They used “old” tools to stabilise the economy and proved that “old tools are still working, at least for now” – said Brad W. Setser Senior Fellow and Acting Director of the Maurice R. Greenberg Centre for Geoeconomic Studies. China among other things cut interest rates, relaxed standards on real estate lending, and authorise a new round of infrastructure investment. However deep concerns are seen to remain about the long term health of the Chinese economy

because the country's growth is still depends on new borrowing and lending. Furthermore they are afraid the combination of rapid credit growth and imperfect incentives will likely lead to future losses.



*Photo: Junjiewu99 [Wikimedia Commons]*

As for the United States, their economic strength seems to stay as strong as always even after the dust settles from the previous presidential election. Of course the United States has an obvious stake in the success of China's transformation, it is obvious that the bleeding foreign exchange reserves could put China in confrontation with the Trump administration. The soon to be President Donald Trump vowed to boost US growth to about 3.5% a year on average. With Trump's presidency they see GDP growth inching up to 2.3% in 2018.



Latin America's expectation from the New Year is to slowly recover from a period of declining commodity prices, which has hobbled the region since 2010.

The region's largest economy, Brazil, seems to have a slow come-back from its worst recession in a century, but still has a forecast of a less than 1 percent growth in 2017.



*Mauricio Macri (middle). Photo: Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires [Wikimedia Commons]*

At the same time Argentina's new president, Mauricio Macri spent his first year in office clearing away the "economical bombs" that were left behind from the former Kirchner presidency.



The Euro area showed resilience overall in the 4th quarter. As the third quarter went away, the Eurozone growth story continued and remained unfazed and the solid performance in the domestic economy drove a steady expansion. The external sector and investment became the weak points of the economy while households took their benefits from low inflation and improving labour market. The unemployment rate inched down in October and economic sentiment rose in November. More to that the euro hit its lowest level seen in years caused by the US Federal Reserve's decision on hiking interest rates. In the United Kingdom the GDP had decelerated in the third quarter, however the growth still remains robust compared to historical levels. They expect the economy to expand the GDP forecast (0.2%) to 1.1% this year, and for 2018 it shall be 1.3%.

“deep concerns are seem to remain about the long term health of the Chinese economy”



## The future prospects for Cyprus peace talks

Violetta Vaski ■

■ Cyprus has been a divided land since 1974, when Turkey invaded the north parts, arbitrarily giving it the title of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The main cause of this invasion was a Greek coup attempt to attach the country to Greece. As a result, Turkish Cypriots felt threatened, hence Turkey have overthrew the coup and ostracised thousands of Cypriots from their homes. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was proclaimed in 1983, but its independence is only recognised by Turkey. The island's southern (Greek) part is a member of the European Union, having a more competitive economy than the northern part. The United Nations is maintaining a Green Line between the two parts since then, which is being overseen by United Nations troops. There are two British military bases under British jurisdiction as well. The discussion between the Greek Cypriot president, Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akinci, the leader of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have already begun about reunification. These negotiations are expected to reach a final stage in January 2017, in Geneva, involving the United Kingdom and UN's special adviser on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide as well. Issues about power sharing, property and economy have been already discussed, the main questions are in connection with territorial and

security concerns. Greek Cypriots would like to get back some parts that were lost during the Turkish intervention, reducing the current 37% of land under Turkish control to 25%, while northerners would agree in 29%. In addition, Greek Cypriots would prefer the getaway of Turkish troops from the island, whereas the Turkish side would preserve its independence both in economy and military affairs. The talks are endowed with a significant rule, as according to experts, this is the last possible chance to reach a settlement, as the ongoing negotiating process has long been described as the Rubik's cube of diplomacy.



Map of Cyprus including Green Zone and UK bases. Image: Chaosdruid [Wikimedia Commons]

As both leaders have shown their commitment to reach a solution, the hope is real. Not only because of providing a better future for the island, but it would represent a powerful example of the cooperation of Muslims and Christians to the world.



## Russian ambassador assassinated in Turkey

Edina Paleviq ■

■ Russian ambassador Andrey Karlov has been shot dead on 19 December 2016, during a speech at an art gallery exhibition in the Turkish capital. The assassination was captured on video. Karlov was several minutes into a speech when he was shot from a man dressed in a suit and tie, who till that moment was standing calmly behind the ambassador. This incident came after days of protest in Turkey over Russia's role in Syria, although Ankara and Moscow are now working closely together to evaluate citizens from the battered city of Aleppo.

The tape shows the man shouting in a mixture Turkish Arabic words: "We made an oath to die in martyrdom ... it is revenge for Syria and Aleppo ... until they are safe, you will not taste safety". He also screamed "Allahu Akbar" (God is great) before saying "Do not forget Aleppo! Do not forget Syria! Only death will remove me from here. Everyone who has taken part in this oppression will one by one pay for it". The attacker was killed by Turkish Special Forces after about 15 minutes of confrontation.

The gunman, who shot the Russian ambassador at least eight times, was identified as Mevlut Mert Altinas, 22 years old, from the town Soke in western Turkey near the Aegean sea coastline.

He had been in active service since 2014, after graduating from Izmir Police School. He was also reported to have served on President Erdogan's security detail twice in 2014 and 2015.

Speaking at a press conference in response to this act, Erdogan blamed Fethullah Gulen, a US-based preacher and critic of Erdogan, who was also been accused of orchestrating the coup in July. He said that he had "no doubt" Altintas was a member of Gulen's organisation and that it had penetrated deeply into the country's police force.

Russia's Foreign Ministry has described the act as a "terrorist attack" and "provocation" aimed at sabotaging a rapprochement between Moscow and Ankara and attempts to resolve the conflict in Syria.



Vladimir Putin paid last respects to the Ambassador in Moscow.  
Photo: President of Russia [[kremlin.ru](http://kremlin.ru)]





## Syrian ceasefire deal signed

Edina Paleviq ■

■ A ceasefire deal was signed in Syria with a number of other documents that should come into force at midnight on the night of December 29–30. The broker of this ceasefire plan was Turkey and Russia and this plan aims to expand a ceasefire in the city of Aleppo. If successfully, the plan will form the basis of upcoming political negotiations between the regime and opposition. The negotiation will take place next month in Astana, the Kazakh republic, overseen by Russia and Turkey.

The deal comes after a series of significant losses for the opposition and a shift in the war's momentum in favour of the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

“We consider the ceasefire an important step to resolve the Syrian conflict [...]. Along with the Russian Federation, we support this arrangement as a guarantor”, said Ibrahim Kalin, the spokesman for the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, said: “We have just received news that a few hours ago the event we have all been waiting for and working towards has happened”. He also said that three documents had been signed: a ceasefire agreement between the Syrian government and the armed opposition; a list of control

mechanisms to ensure the ceasefire would work; and a statement of intent to begin negotiations on a political end to the conflict. The three documents have been signed by the Syrian Arab Republic and seven rebel groups representing more than 60,000 jihadists, but with the exception of al-Qaeda and Daesh.



Aleppo, 23 December 2016.  
Photo: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation [Wikimedia Commons]

“The agreements reached are, of course, fragile, need a special attention and involvement [...] but after all, this is a notable result of our joint work, efforts by the defence and foreign ministries, our partners in the regions,” said Putin, who also has ordered to reduce its military presence in Syria. However, Russia will continue to take action against terrorism, the groups that did not sign the ceasefire agreement, al-Qaeda and Daesh.



## Divergence grows in the US-Israel relationship

Deniz Horuz ■

■ With the decision taken at the UN Security Council, Israel called on the US ambassador regarding his condemnation of the expansion of the settlements in the West Bank with the decision given to UN agencies.

The decision by the UN Security Council on 27 December to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank in East Jerusalem and the withdrawal of the United States from the council during the vote shook US-Israeli relations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on the ambassador of the United States after the US did not use his veto power as one of the founding members in the UN and passed the decision. In a statement Netanyahu claimed that the Obama administration “established an anti-Israel, embarrassing trap in the United Nations.” However, according to the UN resolution, settlements established by Israel in the West Bank now have “no legal validity and violate international laws”. The UN decision declares that no territorial sovereignty negotiated between the parties has been recognised beyond the borders of Israel on 4 June 1967.

Following their development, Netanyahu has

already announced that they have provided about \$8 million to five different organisations affiliated to the United Nations. Netanyahu also said, “They will also look into their relations with UN representatives in Israel.”

On behalf of the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, at the peace conference to be held in Paris on 15 January, the boundaries between Israel and Palestine as well as Jerusalem’s situation, Palestinian refugee issues will be discussed. When Israel decides not to participate in this conference, the Palestinian side announced that they would be dismissed.

The Palestinian Authority may prosecute the Israeli rulers at the International Criminal Court (ICC) under the Geneva Convention if Israeli executives disobey. The ICC is currently conducting an investigation into Israeli activities in Palestinian territories. The newly elected US President, Donald Trump, needs to find eight more countries in the UN Security Council to vote in order to make a new decision on Israel’s settlement policies. Even in this case, the veto of any permanent member will prevent a new decision in favour of Israel.



## Time to get serious about civilian protection for Darfur

### On-anong Homsombath ■

■ Darfur civilian safety is more vulnerable than the United Nation and African Union could have expected. Although the UN-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) mandate was unanimously renewed in last June by the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council. The renewal masks deep divisions within both Councils. Some member states accept the Government of Sudan's position that the war in Darfur is over and that the mission should ultimately withdraw, but still withdrawal is not a morally legitimate option.



Map of Darfur within Sudan. Image: Idaltu [Wikimedia Commons]



UNAMID patrol in Kabkabiya, North Darfur. These patrols are aimed at protecting civilians living in the nearby camps for the displaced as well as other members of the local community in the area. Photo: Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID [Flickr]

During the past 3 years, hundreds of thousands of civilians in Darfur have been forcibly and unlawfully displaced by government troops using the same scorched-earth tactics that have characterised the war from its outset nearly 14 years ago. It was reported by the Secretary General that the government hampers the mission's reporting, including repeated denials of access to the most conflict-affected parts of Darfur and the refusal to grant visas for the mission's staff, especially civilian staff working on issues related to human rights and protection. At the same time, most notably, the government continues monitoring of the mission's activities. Civilians who speak with UNAMID about sensitive issues, and UNAMID national staff who



report on sensitive issues, face a constant risk of arrest and detention. This finally led to an information black hole, leaving UNAMID as the only actor on the ground in Darfur with a mandate and responsibility to report about the conflict. The mission's reporting capabilities are severely hindered by the Government of Sudan. As a result, it stands to reason that the government, which has been accused repeatedly of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, will continue to resist all efforts to document its military activities.



*Children at an IDP camp in El Geneina, West Darfur.  
Photo: Sudan Envoy [Wikimedia Commons]*

The UNAMID's mandate and mission are expected to provide protection for civilians who are displaced by violence and manage to get themselves to bases or camps secured by peacekeepers. However, The UNAMID's mission



*Newly arrived engineers from China serving with the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) stand at attention after arriving in Nyala, South Darfur.  
Photo: Stuart Price [Flickr]*

has consistently failed to protect the population during attacks. It is inadequate and indispensable for many of the two-and-a-half million people who remain displaced at the end of 2016. The large-scale violence that occurred in Jebel Marra between January and September 2016 is also the most recent example of the UNAMID's egregious failure to report.

The war is not over. A peace operation is still necessary. The chief among these steps is the enforcement of the status of forces military agreement between UNAMID and the government of Sudan entitling the mission to full and unrestricted movement throughout Darfur. The large-scale violence against civilians in Darfur in 2016 demonstrates the urgent need for a robust peacekeeping force.

“during the past 3 years, hundreds of thousands of civilians in Darfur have been forcibly and unlawfully displaced by government troops”



## “One China Policy is non-negotiable”

Edina Paleviq ■

■ The “one China” policy refers to the view, that there is only one Chinese government. The government of the Republic of China (the island of Taiwan) claims it is an independent country, whereby China insists that Taiwan is only a breakaway province, an inalienable part of one China and that one day it will be reunified. As a policy this means that countries seeking diplomatic relations with The People’s Republic of China (Mainland China), cannot have, or must break official relations with The Republic of China (Taiwan) or the other way around. This policy afflicted certain segments of Taiwan’s diplomacy in the last decades and has resulted in its diplomatic isolation from international community.

The “one China” policy traces back to 1949. That year, Chinese Communist Party forces backed by the Soviet Union won the civil war and founded the People’s Republic of China. The defeated Nationalists, also known as the Kuomintang regime, fled to Taiwan and made it their seat of government. Taiwan got the official name the Republic of China and this way both sides represented all China.

The ruling Communist Party has threatened Taiwan, if they ever formally declare independence, the People’s Republic of China



*The two Chinas.  
Image: Nat [Wikimedia Commons]*

will use the force. Although, in the recent years has also pursued a softer diplomatic track with the island.

Through this policy Beijing benefited the most, where Taiwan is diplomatically isolated. It is not recognised by many countries, not even by the United Nations.

It maintains cultural and economic relations the neighbours, as well as unofficial relations with the United States, even though the “one China” policy is a delicate balancing act. The policy of the United States to recognise Taiwan as part of



China remains since 1979, with the signing of Taiwan Relations Act. The United States does not support Taiwan's independence, but its biggest interest is to maintain strong but unofficial relations. However, Taiwan is the United States' ninth largest trading partner and this could put the bilateral ties between the United States and the People's Republic of China at risk.

Earlier this month, the president-elect Donald Trump received a phone call from the Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, becoming the first US leader to speak to Taiwan's president since 1979.

In a Tweet, Trump called Tsai the "President of Taiwan", which is "also a break from the previous protocol of referring to the Taiwanese president as the island's "leader" or even "President on Taiwan."

Trump has also suggested, that the "one China" policy could be questioned. "I don't know why we have to be bound by a one-China policy unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things, including trade," Trump said. Apart from this, he also blamed China for devaluing its currency, and not cooperating with



Taipei city. Photo: David Hsieh [Flickr]

Washington on North Korea and the South China Sea.

The Chinese government has reacted rough by saying that "one China" policy is not negotiable and has warned the US, that any change in the US's "one China" policy will impair ties between Beijing and Washington. This situation is very delicate and how Washington can deal with it under Trump remains to be seen.

Secretary of State John Kerry said over the weekend that it "would be helpful" if the president-elect's transition team consulted with the State Department before speaking with foreign leaders.

**“One-China policy is not negotiable and any change in the US's One-China policy will impair ties between Beijing and Washington”**



## Hot tub diplomacy?

### Putin, Abe talk security ties, disputed islands

Violetta Vaski ■



*Russian President Vladimir Putin meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo.  
Photo: President of Russia [kremlin.ru]*

■ Ground-breaking actions have happened concerning the relations between Russia and Japan, as Russian president Vladimir Putin had his first visit in Japan since 11 years. Meeting with Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, their summit took place in Nagato on December 15. The visit was successful, as it was expected to improve bilateral ties between the two nations.

The talks were mainly focusing on economical and territorial issues, emphasising the issues concerning the Kuril Islands. The so-called Northern Territories involving Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan and Habomai were seized by Russia three days after the end of World War Two. The 17,000 Japanese inhabitants living there were later expelled to Hokkaido. This action took

place just nine days after the bombing of Nagasaki, so Japan had little to act out any kind of defence. This meeting has a great significance in overcoming the 71 year old dispute.

Although Japan would prefer to get its territory back, it is not likely to happen, because Kuril Islands play a significant role in security of Russia, as installations there enable to monitor US and Japanese navy forces. However, a peace treaty, with joint economic activities have much greater possibility to be signed in the future. Putin is clearly turning to the East, as US and European sanctions after the annexation of Crimea had their consequences. "For me, the most important thing is to sign a peace agreement because that would create the conditions for long-term co-operation." as Putin expressed. Besides the Peace Treaty which could resolve the island dispute, cooperation and economic ties are important for Japan as well, due to its declining economy.

In addition, Putin and Abe agreed to continue negotiations on joint economic activities moving forward to sign a formal Peace Treaty ending World War Two, as they declared in a common statement.



## Japan recalls diplomats from South Korea over “comfort woman” statue

Deniz Horuz ■

■ The statue which symbolises women used as slaves during the Second World War was placed on 6 January in front of the Japanese Consulate in Busan, South Korea, causing a dispute between the two countries.

Japanese government spokesman Yoshihide Suga announced that the Ambassador of Seoul Yasumasa Nagamine and the Busan Chief Cabinet Secretary will be recalled. Describing the impossibility of placing the statue in front of the consulate, Suga recalled the agreement reached between the two countries last year.



The sculpture representing the South Korean women used by the Japanese army as slaves during Second World War was put in front of the

consulate by activists at the end of last month. The sculpture, which was removed by the police, was planted in the same place again with the local government's decision. Tokyo and Seoul officials for the dispute about the monument that represents slave women in had a mutual agreement at the end of 2015. A foundation was established in Seoul to organize projects for women's therapy, their emotional wounds and their material needs. About 200,000 women from Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and other Asian countries were forced to engage in sexual relations with Japanese troops occupying the Korean Peninsula between 1910 and 1945. Very few South Korean women are still alive now, used as slaves by Japanese soldiers during the war. The money will be divided between the 40 surviving 238 women identified by the South Korean government and the rest of their families.

Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo was generally expected to apologise to slave women and Japan would pay compensation to the victims, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kizida said during a visit to South Korea in December.





## With the new vice president, Venezuela's crisis takes a troubling turn

■ Venezuela's crisis is much more tangled and exponentially unsettling for the United States and the country's political opposition. However, the appointment of the new vice president of Venezuela gives the next US presidential administration, and other countries a hard time to ignore. On 4 January, it was announced by the President Nicolas Maduro that the new vice president of Venezuela is Tareck El Aissami.

The opposition to Maduro has been trying to topple the president by constitutional means, seeking so far unsuccessfully to trigger a recall referendum. But Maduro was thinking about more than thwarting the referendum when he named his new vice president. In effect, Maduro has anointed a successor. Opposition leaders see the move as a sign that the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) is determined to hold onto power beyond Maduro's term.

The new vice president, Tareck El Aissami, a man who has reportedly helped forge back-channel links for Caracas to terrorists and drug traffickers. Until being appointed vice president, El Aissami was governor of the state of Aragua. Before that he was minister of the interior and justice. Always a very close ally to the late President Hugo Chavez and a militant Chavista, El Aissami's new job, and the mountain of allegations about his previous activities, significantly change the country's outlook.

### On-anong Homsombath ■

Congressional committees in the United States and investigative journalists are familiar with El Aissami's name in connection with drug trafficking and Middle East terrorism. Additionally, the respected Brazilian magazine *Veja* and several other investigations reported, as interior minister El Aissami developed ties with Iran, Syria and Hezbollah, and he allegedly orchestrated a secret program that gave Venezuelan passports to terrorists. In 2015, a US congressional echoed the charges that El Aissami had links with terrorist organisations, claiming he had provided government-issued passports and other documents to terrorists in order "to embed potential threats to the Middle East into North America via Latin America." The US Drug Enforcement Administration has also, according to several published reports, fingered El Aissami as key to activities they say have made Venezuela a major drug-trafficking hub.

Venezuela is now considered being in free fall and dim prospects, with hunger spreading, shortages worsening and discontent rising. Until now, Washington has mostly treated Venezuela's dramatic social and economic disintegration as a matter to be watched from afar: troubling, to be sure, but without very significant repercussions beyond its own borders or neighbourhood. This has put Venezuela on the global security radar.



## ■ News in Brief

### Brexit – a threat for businesses

■ A recent poll, carried out by the European Business Awards for accountancy firm RSM, showed that the majority of businesses based in the European Union, see their firms in danger as a consequence of Brexit. Only 39 % of the business leaders look at the situation as an opportunity. The survey finds out that access to the single market is the greatest priority for European firms in the UK. Earlier in December, businesses pushed the government to act out for a transitional agreement in order to offer a “Brexit bridge” to companies. In this way, maybe the distrust of businesses might be displaced, and their movement to other financial centres could be prevented.

### Europe on the French ballots

■ The next big test for the European Union is the forthcoming France’s Election. Marine Le Pen, a fierce opponent of membership in the EU, is a serious contender to the French presidency. Founding member, a French “non” in a possible referendum would mean more than 2005 – when a treaty intending to create new federal institutions for the bloc fails on the test of public – and more than the Brexit. With the economic recession and refugees’ crisis leading the debate, the other frontrunners for 23 April election are Francois Fillon, Benoît Hamon, Emmanuel Macron, and Jean-Luc Melenchon. All candidates still need to be approved by the Constitutional Council.

### Berlin Christmas market attack

■ Twelve people lost their lives in an attack that occurred at 20:14 local time on 19 December in a Christmas market in Berlin the capital city of Germany. The casualties by numbers are 49 people were injured, including 18 on the offensive, 18 people were wounded in the attack, 12 of them lost their lives together with the Polish truck driver. Eye witnesses of the attack on the Christmas market near Berlin's famous Kaiser Wilhelm Church say that the truck has entered the market at about 65 kilometres per hour. The attack was undertaken by the ISIS. The suspect is the Tunisian citizen Anis Amri, 24 years old. The first person to associate Amri with the attack was the ID found in the truck and thought to have fallen during the fight that resulted in the death of the Polish truck driver. The police authorities in Berlin have recently announced that Amri’s fingerprints are in the car. Tunisian suspect Anis Amri was killed in a clash in which Italy entered Milan with police in connection with the attack.

### Cyber-attacks exposing real threat

■ Since three years, Russia is putting great effort in recruiting programmers to take part in cyberwarfare. Recruiters are searching in every levels of society, amongst college students, professionals or even in the world of criminals. American intelligence agencies blame Russian hackers for stealing data from the Democratic National Committee in the presidential



campaign period, which even resulted in sanctions under Obama administration. Germany has also faced a serious Bundestag attack, of which the same team, called APT 28 and a related one, APT 29 can be accused of. According to Chancellor Angela Merkel, this kind of hybrid warfare unfortunately became a daily routine over the past few years, adding that “we must learn to manage this.”

### **Russian diplomats expelled from US**

■ On December 29 Barack Obama, the president of the United States, made a statement that the immediate expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats is necessary for security reasons. He said that the action is “a necessary and appropriate response to efforts to harm US interests in violation of established international norms of behaviour”. The diplomats are accused of espionage, and interference in the US election through cyber warfare. The Russian diplomats were given 72 hours to leave the country and two of their compounds for intelligence gathering have been denied. American diplomats were harassed in Russia as well, which belongs to one of the main causes of the action.

### **Islamic nations to host pledging conference for aid to Yemen**

■ It has been announced that Islamic nations will be hosting Pledging Conference for Aid to Yemen in early 2017. The members of Islamic Cooperation are taking lead in organising a pledging conference for humanitarian assistance and development aid to Yemen. The proposed conference is being backed by the United

Nations, the World Bank, the Yemeni government, member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council and several international donors, including the US, Germany, Sweden, Japan and UK. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Secretary General (OIC), General Yousuf Al-Othaimen, states the aim of the conference is to find ways to support the Yemeni people and the need to bridge the huge gap in the required financing for humanitarian action in Yemen. Hesham Youssef, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, said the primary objective of the conference is to convene the international community to help in addressing the needs of the people of Yemen, boost the capacity for urgent humanitarian response and address the medium-term developmental needs in Yemen. However, he also states that OIC will still need to work on finding ways to coordinate aid effort more effectively.

### **Philippines boxing match bomb blast**

■ During a boxing match, in an annual Roman Catholic holiday festival, in the Philippines, two bombs have exploded. Around 35 people have been injured. Police recovered an 81mm mortar cartridge and a mobile phone, apparently used to detonate the homemade bombs. As the attackers were not known, the Philippine forces have been placed on alert amid on and off offensives in the country's south against Muslim militants, including Abu Sayyaf gunmen and armed sympathisers of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant group who have targeted the capital, Manila, and other urban centres in the past.





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