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News and Background

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About CRP News & Background

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Ukraine elected a new leader

The Ukrainian crisis does not seem to be getting solved in the near future. In May the country saw many violent attacks, against pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian protesters as well. The attacks still come from both sides and according to journalists and political observers the government is becoming incapable of concentrating its powers on all the problems. As an attempt for handling the crisis, a new president was elected on 25 May, who might be a new hope for creating a united Ukraine.

The new president is Petro Poroshenko, a pro-European billionaire who got his wealth in the chocolate industry after the fall of the Soviet Union. Poroshenko's main aim - as he told after the win - is to be the conciliator, and to bring peace to the country. As a symbolic first step, he is willing to visit the most problematic area, the Donetsk Basin. Apart from declaring the main principle of the United Ukraine, his biggest and most significant plan is to build closer ties with the European Union.

But many still do not see Poroshenko's politics that promising. First of all, in spite of the fact that he got the vast majority of votes, the elections could be called anything but democratic. In the Eastern



*Petro Poroshenko at 46th Munich Security Conference in 2010
Photo: Kathrin Möbius*

area – with mostly pro-Russian voters – many polling places were closed, making it impossible for thousands of people to vote and to express their will. For example in the city of Donetsk with its 1 million residents there was no possibility to vote at all. According to the official statement it happened because the buildings were attacked by pro-Russian protesters. Moreover, a few days before some rebels asked for ignoring the elections.

Many anti-corruption activists also point out the fact that Poroshenko got really wealthy after the collapse of the Soviet Union - his possession is estimated around 1.3 billion USD – so he might be connected to certain



inner circles, taking the chance away from real changes. It could also be a reason for him to represent the interests only of the wealthiest. Apart from this, he has served both ends of the political palette: as foreign minister during the pro-Western era of Yuschenko and as economy minister under Yanukovych. This way, his political dedication can be questioned for a reason.

Not talking about the possible outcomes and earlier refusing the removal of Viktor Yanukovych, even Vladimir Putin expressed his support for a democratic government. As the Russian President told in Saint Petersburg just a few days before the actual elections, he would respect the winner and would work with them on the best solution. According to many experts it can be a crucial point as it is the first time that he made a big step towards bringing off negotiations that are based on equality. He also called for a referendum, claiming that according to the current one Yanukovych is still in charge of leading the country.

The real national consensus can be more important than ever as the attacks have become more and more violent and there

seem to be a real social cleavage in the Ukrainian society. On 2 May in Sloviansk many pro-Russians got injured or arrested in a government offensive, while from the other side Russian forces shot down two Ukrainian helicopters. On the same day in Odessa 42 rebels were killed, when as a result of a public clash on the street they barricaded themselves inside a government building which caught on fire. Another hot spot of the debates is the 11 May referendum. As a result, pro-Russian separatist in Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence from Ukraine. As expected, it was accepted by Russia, but not by Kiev or Western countries, giving more reasons for further conflicts.

Effective dialogue might be a crucial part of the solution between the Russian and the Ukrainian leadership. As Vladimir Putin said, he would be open to that, but his basic demand is that the Ukrainian forces stopped the offense against the rebels. Meanwhile, Kiev's position is that they will continue until peace and order are restored in the East. The two point of views seem to form a vicious cycle so the final outcome will probably remain unclear for a longer period.

Russia-China gas deal made

Due to the Western embargo, Russia is looking for new markets to enforce its economic and political interests in the East. Because of this, in the end of May Moscow signed an estimated 400 billion USD worth gas deal with China for 30 years. The contract will come into force in 2018 and is said to be beneficial for both economies – for Russia because of the high prices, and for China because of the good quality and clean fuel.



Forming the Eurosceptic Union?

The voice of far right and eurosceptic parties that want to diminish – or abolish – the European Union's influence is getting louder in the European Parliament. Experts are talking about “political earthquake” that can have further effect on the EU's political direction.

The changes can be seen on national level in the EP election results, mainly in France and the United Kingdom. In France, Marine Le Pen's National Front gained majority in 70 percent of the regions, winning 24 seats in the Parliament. Le Pen, talking about the results, said that “the people have spoken loud and clear...they no longer want to be led by those outside our borders, by EU commissioners and technocrats who are unelected. They want to be protected from globalisation and take back the reins of our destiny”. French Prime Minister Manuel Valls called the National Front win “serious, very serious for France, for Europe”.

In the UK, the results were also surprising as it was the first time that on a national vote not the Conservative, neither the Labour Party got the majority. Instead, the UK Independence Party did with 27.5 percent and 24 MEPs in the Parliament. UKIP leader Nigel Farage, commenting the win,

expressed his opinion about the EU's and UK's common future, telling that “I don't just want Britain to leave the European Union. I want Europe to leave the European Union”.

The results were similar in Denmark as well, where the Danish People's Party – constantly raising its voice against immigration and the European Union – gained 13 seats, getting 26.7 percent of the votes.

Apart from the winning parties, the participation rates are also evident indicators of the growing euroscepticism. In spite of the fact that after years of declining this number grew by 0.1 percent, the positive tendency can be seen mostly only in those countries, where voting is compulsory – such as Belgium. But for example in Slovakia it hardly reached 13 percent.

The results are vital, as the European Parliament elections – being the largest multi-national democratic one – influence the life of 500 million citizens. In spite of the decline, pro-Europe politicians still form a majority, and according to the forecasts, will remain the most determinative force in the next elections as well.



Egypt's elections raise questions of democracy



Abdel Fattah Saeed Al Sisi. Photo: Secretary of Defense

Between 26 and 28 of May Egypt held its second presidential election since 2011, when the revolution put an end to Hosni Mubarak's rule. There were only two candidates: former Defence Minister Abdul Fattah el-Sisi and Egyptian Popular Current leader Hamdeen Sabahi. El-Sisi won with the majority of votes, but according to political observers and analysts, in spite of democratic institutions, the election was everything but democratic, which can cause several problems in the future. The

main issue can be seen in the results: Abdul Fattah el-Sisi won 96.91 per cent of the votes, 13 million more than Mohamed Morsi in 2012. This number indicates that there was no real alternative and no opponent that had even a little chance of victory. According to Democracy International, the whole election can be seen rather as a formality: el-Sisi had all the resources, all the media attention and everyone knew the results even before the votes. The only purpose was to give international recognition for the regime.

This attitude may cause the fact that due to the low turnout, the originally two-day election had to be prolonged with one extra. This day was declared to be a national holiday so that everyone could go to the ballots. There were warnings going on television that the absentees would have to pay a fine. Even with all these steps taken, only 47.5 per cent of the whole population went to vote. This is wrong from many aspects: from one hand, it raises the question of democratic leadership, while from the other hand it is damaging for the government as there is no real legitimacy for its steps. As the constitution guarantees democratic frames for the elections,



international analysts do not see the solution in changing them. As a judge, Nabil Salib expressed his opinion that the society needs to be changed by a better economic situation and better education to improve their knowledge on the world. According to him, until then elections should be cancelled.

Aside from democratic issues, the results show a very important part of Egypt's political transition: it indicates that the only

thing citizens want is security. After years of revolution and civil war there is a chance that with national consensus the new government can build up a whole new system. But while stability is a basic essential of a properly functioning state it is a question whether it will turn into an authoritarian system or will consider the demands and needs of those who are not close to the power's inner circles.

“after years of revolution and civil war there is a chance that with national consensus the new government can build up a whole new system”



Artwork found on a wall lining a street in Alexandria, Egypt shortly after the revolution of 2011.
Photo: Ziad AbdellatifSalah



Nigeria: Boko Haram troubles

Naomi Mutah, representative of the Chibok people, has been taken into custody due to her leadership of the protests over the kidnapping of more than 200 girls in Nigeria. Mutah participated in a meeting organized by First Lady Patience Jonathan and was taken away to the police station after the meeting. The activist took part in the meeting as representative of the Chibok community, from where the girls have been kidnapped. Mrs. Jonathan, who supposedly felt offended because Mutah appeared on the meeting instead of the girls' parents, ordered her detainment. Pogo Bitrus, also Chibok community leader, said Mrs. Jonathan has no constitutional power to order Mutah's arrest. Another member of the Chibok community said that Mrs. Jonathan made accusations against the protesters that they only fabricated the story of the abducted girls in order to stain the government's reputation.

Protesters feel that the Nigerian government did not do enough in order to find the abducted girls, who went missing from a boarding school in Borno state on April 15. The girls are thought to have been kidnapped by the Islamist group, Boko Haram. The group did not comment on the



Logo of Boko Haram. Picture: Arnold Platon [Wikimedia Commons]

accusations, however. Boko Haram used to be a local terrorist group but throughout the years it became strongly linked to al-Qaeda. Since 2009, Boko Haram is causing serious trouble in Nigeria. The group has committed several mass attacks and bombings, especially in the north east of the country, where Borno state is located. The aim of the group is to clean the country of Christianity and create an Islamic state. President Goodluck Jonathan said he does not know where the girls are, but his government will do everything to find them. Tanimu Turaki, chairman of the special committee, which is set up by Jonathan to negotiate with Boko Haram, said that the Nigerian government is ready for direct



talks with the Islamist group. Leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, said the girls, who had not converted to Islam, could be released in exchange of jailed militiamen. Mr. Turaki said if Shekau is serious about the proposal, he should send men to negotiate. Meanwhile, a video was released on which 130 girls can be seen while they are reciting the Koran. According to parents, except a number of the girls, most of them are Christians.

Nigeria's neighbouring countries declared war on Boko Haram. Chadian President Idriss Déby has announced this after a

The US announced that it is deploying a mission to Nigeria to find the girls. A team of 30 US experts is already in the country to help with the search. President Jonathan also asked the National Assembly to extend the state of emergency for another six months in Borno and in other states in the northeast, where Boko Haram is the most active.

In May, the country had to face with several attacks from Boko Haram. The group has carried out many bomb and suicide attacks, slaughtered civilians; attacked schools, churches and bus

“the group has carried out many bomb and suicide attacks, slaughtered civilians; attacked schools, churches and bus stations”

summit in Paris. The summit was held after the news about the kidnapped girls spread and was called by French President Francois Hollande. Countries like Cameroon, Benin, and Niger will cooperate to break the power of Boko Haram. UK, US, the EU, Britain, and France will also take part in the fight against the terror group. The leaders who attended agreed on stronger international cooperation and stricter border controls. Goodluck Jonathan also said that without the collaboration of Western African countries, Boko Haram could not be defeated. He also vowed total war against Boko Haram and promised to take back the abducted girls and to protect Nigeria's democracy.

stations. On May 21, Boko Haram militiamen killed 30 people. They attacked villages (Shawa and Alagarno), where they stole food and fired on civilians who were trying to escape. Until now, no group has taken responsibility for a bomb attack in the capital of Plateau state, Jos. Although, the fact that Boko Haram bombings are frequent, it is highly possible that the group carried out the attack. However, the area is also troubled by the violent rivalry between the Muslim Fulani herdsmen and the mostly Christian Berom farmers. 118 people died and 56 were injured. The death toll is still increasing, however. Two bombs went off in a market and a hospital. Most of the victims were women.



Fighting continues in Sudan

The town of Bentiu, capital of Unity State situated in the north of South Sudan, has been alternately occupied by government and rebel forces. In the last month, rebel forces took it over, including the oil hub situated in the town. The UN accused the rebel forces of killing hundreds of people during and after the occupation. The rebel forces denied the accusations, however. Meanwhile the other party has also been charged with committing war crimes. On May 4, government forces announced that they will launch an offensive in order to take back the area. As a response the rebel forces began a counteroffensive. The ongoing atrocities in the area are one of the worst in the country.

The attack was carried out two days after US Secretary of State John Kerry agreed with President Salve Kiir to take part in peace talks with his rival, Riek Machar in Addis Ababa. Kerry met Kiir on his diplomatic visit to Africa. The peace talks would have been mediated by Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. Following the attack in Bentui, Kerry said that the only way to restore peace in the country is to organize peace talks between the two warring parties. Otherwise, the participants will have to face sanctions. The



Location of South Sudan. Map: Wikimedia Commons

UN Security Council also warned that those responsible for stirring violence will be severely punished. Kerry also called for more UN peacekeepers to be deployed into the country. The UN has around 8,500 peacekeepers in South Sudan at the moment. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also plans to travel South Sudan. Riek Machar's response for peace talk initiations was negative. He dismissed the possibility of a direct meeting. First, he wants to see a schedule for the formation of a transitional government. Second, he demands that the composition and the structure of this government also be



outlined. The two parties already made a peace agreement in January, which has been breached several times since then. If the fight will not end soon, the country will most likely to face civil war and severe famine. The World Food Programme warned that 3.9 million people will most likely face emergency or crisis levels of food insecurity in June and August. At the moment, the number of people who are in

immediate need of humanitarian aid is 4.9 million.

Cities have been destroyed and thousands of people have already been died and around one million people have been displaced due to the ongoing fights. People fled to Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya. Still, there is less and less hope of a real ceasefire.

“World Food Programme warned that 3.9 million people will most likely face emergency or crisis levels of food insecurity in June and August”



Salva Kiir, president of South Sudan. Photo: Al Jazeera English



Military coup in Thailand



Prayuth Jan-ocha. Photo: Government of Thailand

Thailand military announced a coup on May 22 after six months of negotiations between rival political parties. The country has been facing a political turmoil since late last year, when Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra dissolved the lower house of the parliament. Shinawatra, Thailand's first female prime minister, won the elections in 2011, as the member of the Pheu Thai Party. Her decision to dissolve the lower house brought about street protests. 28 people died and 700 were injured in the ongoing political fight. The protesters demanded the removal of the Pheu Thai

government. In the beginning of May, a court decision ordered Shinawatra to remove from her position due to abusing her power. She was succeeded by Niwatthamrong Boonsongpaisan, who remained in power only for three weeks because of the military coup.

The coup was announced after the two rival parties were not able to reach an agreement during peace talks. Head of army, General Prayuth Chan-ocha declared martial law in the country and a day later the military took over control. He said that the coup was necessary in order to recover peace in the country. The new military led government would reform the country, including its political system, society, and its economy.

The military fired in the air to disperse a pro-government protester camp. Then an overnight curfew was announced. Political gatherings were banned and TV broadcasting was also suspended. The cabinet was told to report to the military. Along with other political leaders, Shinawatra was arrested following the coup. The constitution of the country was also suspended, but courts and the senate would function as before. The coup was the 19th since the Siamese Revolution of 1932, which changed the system of government from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy.



China-Vietnam relations

Anti-China riots broke out in Vietnam on May 14, following looting and arson in the south. Thousands of Vietnamese people began to set fire to Chinese factories or factories that were thought to be Chinese and looted in industrial areas close to Ho Chi Minh City. The number of casualties is still not clear.

A hospital doctor said that out of 21 dead, 16 were Chinese. A Chinese news agency reported that at least two Chinese died and 100 were wounded. In Vietnam, Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh first said that media reports are false and only one person died. Later, Hanoi said that two people were killed and 140 were wounded. One of the factories that was damaged the most in the atrocities said that four of its employees died and 126 was injured in the attacks.

The riot was one of the worst of the atrocities in Sino-Vietnamese relations since the border war of 1979. 460 companies reported that protesters attacked their areas, only in the area of Binh Duong, an industrial zone close to Ho Chi Minh City. 600 hundred people have been arrested. More than 3,000 Chinese people had to flee the country. Most of them fled to



Vietnamese protesting against China in Hanoi. Photo: VOA

Cambodia, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, or Singapore. China's Foreign Minister also advised Chinese nationals avoid travelling to Vietnam for a while. A Chinese airline company, Spring and Autumn Airline, also plans to cancel flights from China to Vietnam, which means the cancellation of nine flights. Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dun ordered local police to restore peace as soon as it possible. The Planning and Investment Ministry put the blame on radicals. China urged Vietnam to punish those responsible for the troubles. The Metallurgical Corporation that was damaged the most is still under construction. It is being built by Formosa Plastics Group, Taiwan's biggest investor in



Vietnam. When the factory will be complete, it will be the largest steel factory in Southeast Asia. It is situated in one of those industrial areas that strongly contribute to Vietnamese economy and also employs a lot of people. The factory was set on fire after a fight erupted between Chinese and Vietnamese workers. China and Vietnam are politically and economically connected to each other, however the two countries have hostile relations. Vietnamese resentment is strong due to national pride and the more than 1000 years of Chinese colonisation that lasted until the 10th century. US warned the two sides that they should solve the problem through dialogue and not violence.

The riots erupted after Chinese vessels clashed with Vietnamese naval ships in the South China Sea, which is a disputed territory. Countries, like Vietnam, China, the Philippines, Brunei, and Malaysia claim

parts of the area. The collision occurred when Vietnamese navy tried to stop Chinese ships from setting up an oil rig in the area that is claimed by both countries. Shots were not fired, but water cannons were used. Both nations accused the other of being responsible for the incident, which is the most serious between China and Vietnam since many years. Vietnam said that Chinese ships attacked their vessels, but China claims that the territory belongs to their country. Sailors were injured, but no one died.

Before the incident, Philippine police captured a Chinese fishing boat. According to reports, the crew was allegedly transported endangered species. The 11 men travelling on the boat was arrested and charges would be brought against them, Philippine officials said. China commented that the action was provocative and demanded that the fishermen be released.

China and Russia: join naval exercise in the East China Sea

China and Russia will conduct a joint naval exercise in the disputed area of the East China Sea. Drills would begin in the end of May, close to Shanghai. The naval exercise will extend to the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu Islands in Japanese), which is a group of islands controlled by Japan and claimed by China. The two countries have already held joint military and naval exercises since 2005.

Strengthening Japanese NATO relations

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has signed a new agreement with NATO. Japan wants to build up a stronger cooperation with the organization. They will collaborate in areas like disaster relief, humanitarian aid and the fight against piracy. According to analysts, Japan wants to tighten connections with the West due to international security concerns.



New US foreign policy



U.S. President Barack Obama. Photo: Elizabeth Cromwell

President Barack Obama has announced a new US foreign policy when holding a speech at the graduation ceremony of the US Military Academy at West Point, New York. Obama said that the US military has to show control and to cooperate more with its international allies worldwide. As Obama said, the US will use military force when its necessary, but it will act on general agreement. Obama has also said that the

US will provide a fund of \$5bn in order to fight against terrorism in the world. The money would go for missions in the frame of which

security forces are trained in Yemen. The fun would also provide support for the military force to restore peace in Somalia. Obama said that the French would also receive support in Mali. Finally Obama also promised that his country would help Syria and give aid to the opposition of President Assad.

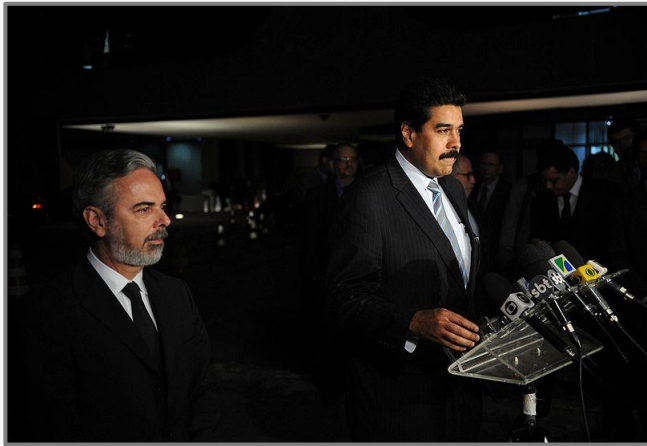
From now, the US wants to concentrate on peacekeeping and to reduce the number of its enemies. The end of combat mission in Afghanistan will contribute to the new foreign policy as more resources will be available. Obama's speech was the first in a series which is supposed to respond to those who levelled criticism on the government claiming that it has a weak foreign policy.

Reducing troop level in Afghanistan

Troop level will be reduced one year following the end of combat mission in December in Afghanistan. As Obama announced, 9,800 US troops will remain in the country. This number will be cut in half in 2015. The remaining troops will remain to train and advise Afghan security forces. A Special Operations will also remain in order to continue the fight against terrorism. In 2016, only a reduced military presence will exist in Afghanistan, stationing in Kabul and at the Bagram air base.



Venezuela protests heat up amid opposition rift



Nicolás Maduro. Photo: Agência Brasil

The anti-government demonstrations in Venezuela do not come to an end. Whereas the Venezuelan government under Nicolás Maduro is speaking of coup attempts, backed by the United States, opponents say political oppression and economic dissatisfaction in Venezuela have formed a strong opposition, with students leading the way. Newspapers had reported in May, that ongoing student-led protests against the government have escalated in several arrests and violent fights with the government forces, and USA Today, the national American daily newspaper, stated that such movements had been a direct result of the failed attempts of the opposition to enter into

dialogue with the government. It further reveals divisions within the opposition, especially in regards to the question whether US sanctions should be imposed on the Maduro government as a result of the ongoing protests. The statement of the assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, who testified in the Senate that opposition leaders had urged the US government to consider sanctions, such as the banning of visa, was later rejected by the Venezuelan opposition, which claimed never to have asked for such measures.

The Venezuelan case is an obscure one, as media coverage and opinions clash over numbers of protesters and opposition members as well as conspiracy theories; fuelled by economic, political and ideological divisions. The support by other Latin American nations, which adopt a rather wait-and-see position, confirms the Venezuelan government in its West-vs.-Us belief. Maduro claims that, while the Venezuelan opposition has received more than verbal support from the United States in form of financing and training, it is also backing the so-called student movement which is nothing but a smart intelligence



agency technique. Supporters of the Venezuelan government feel vindicated by the revelation of cables through WikiLeaks, which described US plans to undermine the previous government, including “penetrating Chávez’s political base” and “isolating Chávez internationally.” In 2002, Irish reporters had filmed an attempted coup, backed by the US government, which was later published via Youtube as “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” and which caused an outcry among Chávez

sympathisers and supporters of socialist governments all over Latin America and abroad. Also in this case, a middle-class demonstration had led to violence that served as a pretext for the coup against Chávez. Western media and newspapers had painted a picture of a broad uprising of the Venezuelan population, whereas the film material revealed that effective propaganda was a matter of the right camera angle.

“Western media and newspapers had painted a picture of a broad uprising of the Venezuelan population, whereas the film material revealed that effective propaganda was a matter of the right camera angle”



Venezuela protests against the Nicolas Maduro government, Maracaibo. Photo: Wilfredor [Wikimedia Commons]



■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Sudan: woman sentenced to death due to her Christianity

■ The world was shocked when the 27-year-old Meriam Yehya Ibrahim was sentenced to death due to her Christianity. After her brother filed a complaint against the young woman, court convicted her of renunciation of faith. She was also charged with adultery as she married to a Christian man. Ibrahim was born to a Muslim father and an Orthodox mother. According to Ibrahim after her father abandoned the family, her mother raised her as a Christian. However, court considers her a Muslim. The pregnant woman is now in prison, waiting for the final verdict.

16 people die in Yemen clashes

■ At least 16 people were killed when fights erupted between the Shi'ite Muslim group and the government and its ally, the Sunni Muslims. Members of the Shi'ite Houthi tribe attacked military and security posts near Omran, north of the Yemeni capital Sanaa. The group killed six soldiers and one officer. As a response the army killed nine of the attackers. A report, coming from the Houthi says that it was the army who opened fire on a group of civilians Shi'ite supporters. Earlier this month, 40 people have already been killed in the violent clashes between the parties.

Kenya: 10 killed in explosions

■ 10 people have been killed and 70 were wounded in explosions in Nairobi. The two bombs went off on a bus station and on a market. Two days before the attacks, British government warned citizens to avoid areas, including the part where the bombs exploded. Previously, tourists were also evacuated from seaside resorts. Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta, was questioning the reason for such an action. According to sources, the action was carried out due to recent bomb attacks. Citizens criticised the government for not being able to prevent terrorist attacks after it promised it will take measures to put an end to terrorism in the country. The al-Shabaab said that it will target Kenya after its army supported Somalia in crushing the extremist group.

Al-Shabab attack on Somali parliament

■ Islamists militants attacked Somali parliament in Mogadishu. A car bomb went off and gunfire followed. The militant group then attacked the building. Members of the parliament were evacuated, but two MPs were wounded. Ten people died in the attack. Fighting was going on inside after the militiamen stormed into the building. African Union troops joined the security forces in fighting the Islamist group. The government managed to push out the al-Shabab from major cities in 2011 and 2012, but the group still causes serious trouble. It has frequently targeted the parliament building until the current attack.



■ News in Brief

Bilateral relations

Cooperation protocol between Angola and Cabo Verde

■ During his official visit to Cabo Verde, Angolan speaker Fernando da Piedade agreed to sign a cooperation protocol with the country. The two sides want to strengthen their parliamentary relations. A program of cooperation will also be signed after a meeting of Cabo Verdean and Angolan parliamentary representatives.

Russia-Iran nuclear cooperation continuing

■ Russia is planning to sign a contract with Iran about planting two new nuclear reactors in Bushehr, a power plant of the Islamic state that was built with Moscow's help. The possible deal raised Western concerns as there is still a chance that Iran is willing to use its nuclear capacity to produce weapons. Iran denies any such intent, but the doubt can be an obstacle in further negotiations. The talks will continue in Vienna in June.

Found drones came from North Korea, South's defence ministry says

■ The Korean division, by some referred to as a never-ending Cold War, is about to turn "hot" again. The launch of three drones in May and the recent North Korean missile tests prompt anxiety among South Korean officials. Seoul's defence ministry called the actions "a violation of the truce that ended the bloody conflict between North and South Korea in 1953". Seoul's response to Pyongyang's threats usually comes via the United Nations as both sides still hold on to their policy of not holding diplomatic relations with each another. The UN has been imposing sanctions against DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of North Korea) since 2000 and was further tightening these in January 2013 after the country reportedly launched long missiles close to the demilitarised zone. Ban Ki-Moon, the South Korean UN Secretary General, repeatedly urged Pyongyang to end missile tests and has turned to other members of the Six Party countries for support. The Six Party talks, launched in 2003, which are aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear program through negotiations involving China, the United States, North and South Korea, Japan, and Russia, have failed in the past due to different approaches by the six party governments and an unpredictable North Korean regime. The UN's proposal for economic sanctions had eventually been approved by all of the six party governments. China, so far one of North Korea's few allies, is trying to get North Korea back to the negotiating table, yet Pyongyang rejects talks, regarding the heavy US naval presence in the Pacific and the deployment of 28,500 US troops in South Korea as a direct threat to North Korea.



China tightens bilateral relations with Ethiopia

■ China and Ethiopia have announced that they will improve their bilateral relations. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang hopes that this will further develop China-Ethiopia and China-Africa relations. He also said that the two sides should cooperate in infrastructure building and energy development. Meanwhile China will encourage Chinese companies to invest in Ethiopia. Cooperation in education, culture, tourism, and technology is also on the schedule.

Venezuela signs deal to provide Palestinian Authority with oil

■ Palestine and Venezuela, as two nations which are clearly standing in the spotlight these days, and which urgently seek political support in the world, have signed an important energy pact which sees the provision of Venezuelan diesel fuel to Palestine at a subsidised price. The “Petro-Palestina” pact is the result of close diplomatic relations between the two countries, which started in 2009 under ex-president Chávez and which also sees the establishment of cultural relations, such as the exchange of students and the granting of Palestine observer status in Latin American organisations. Against the background of failed peace talks between Israel and Palestine, this pact is of important matter to Palestine, making it less dependent on Israeli electricity supply, which is currently limited to half strength for an hour a day. Venezuela had broken off diplomatic relations with Israel as a result of its Gaza politics in 2009. Maduro showed confidence in bypassing the economic blockade imposed by Israel, stating that the Palestinian cause was a „global cause” for the independence and the welfare of the Palestinian people. During the talks, the two leaders had repeatedly shown their mutual respect for each other’s ideologies, as well as for the former Venezuelan leader, Hugo Chávez, who died in May this year, and who had always been a faithful exponent of the Palestinian cause.

“against the background of failed peace talks between Israel and Palestine, this pact is of important matter to Palestine, making it less dependent on Israeli electricity supply, which is currently limited to half strength for an hour a day”



■ News in Brief

International relations

Somali piracy is still a threat

■ In spite of a significant decline since 2011, piracy in Somalia still means danger to water transport and in extreme cases to Western tourists. As the transport routes crossing the area are crucial for many big countries, the NATO, China and Japan have taken serious steps to arrest the most notorious pirates in the past years. The World Bank noted that it can still mean an “extra tax” on world trade as it costs an estimated amount of 18 billion dollars every year. To prevent the loss, the shipping sector follows new regulations: there is usually a group of armed guards on the board, the travel speed is higher and they try to navigate as far from the coast as possible.

Turkey: \$124 million for Cyprus invasion

■ The European Court of Human Rights ordered Turkey to pay \$124 million (€90 million) for invading Cyprus in 1974. One third of this money is supposedly going to those who went missing during the occupation. The rest will go to Greek Cypriots, living in the north. The application to the court is based on a former judgment that said that Turkey committed human right violations. The question whether Turkey will really pay is disputed.

Death of French photojournalist in the Central African Republic

■ The 26-year-old Camille Lepage was killed in the Central African Republic. In her last tweet, she said she is travelling with the anti-balaka group. The circumstances of her death are still unknown. French president, Francois Hollande said they will do everything to find out what happened. He ordered French police positioning in the CAR to investigate the scene. Lepage moved to South Sudan in July 2012, but in the last few months she worked in the CAR. She was publishing in the Guardian, Le Monde, the Sunday Times and other significant newspapers.

Two Palestinian killed by Israeli forces

■ Two Palestinians were killed during the protest on Thursday, May 15 by Israeli forces. The protests were commemorating the so-called Nakba Day. It is a day of remembrance of Palestinian displacement in 1948, which was followed by the foundation of Israel. The two men, 22 and 17, were both hospital officials. Israeli military did not comment on the events, but they said border police was involved.



New European institute fosters peaceful dialogue

■ Nine European Union member states, Sweden, Belgium, Finland, Italy, Luxemburg, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and Hungary created the European Institute of Peace, aiming to promote peace through informal dialogue. Each of these countries will contribute with financial support to launch the activities, while later it will work on donations and on its own resources. The institute is independent from governments and the EU, although it is planning to build up a good relationship with them. While according to many experts, such an institute is necessary, some – mainly US – journalists calls into question its necessity and possible efficiency.



Logo of the European Institute of Peace. Picture: eip.org

Russia, China block UN proposition in Syria

■ Russia and China blocked UN Security Council proposal to investigate war crimes in Syria. Out of the 15 countries only Russia and China vetoed the resolution. The US government said that with this decision the two countries are in the way of bringing justice and peace to local people. Russia's UN envoy, Vitaly Churkin explained his country's decision by saying that the timing was wrong. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons also called for the full removal of Syria's remaining chemical, including chlorine, which was allegedly used by Syria. Meanwhile, the country is facing turmoil. The most recent clashes caused the death of 203 people.





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