

Quarterly Review of International Relations

October-December 2016

CHIARA D'AURIA

October 1st:

Even though in August 2016 the Western-backed government in Kabul has pushed Taliban back with the US strikes, the fighters advance closer to Lashkar Gah, in southern province of Helmand.

October 2nd:

Hungarians are expected to reject the European Union's migrant quotas in a *referendum* but turnout is likely to be too low to make the vote valid, disappointing Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

October 3rd:

Colombia's government and Marxist guerrillas scramble to revive a plan to end their 52-year war after voters reject the deal in a shock *referendum* result.

October 4th:

US State Department suspends bilateral talks with Russia on Syria, adding that it will use «ways of communications with Moscow».

October 5th:

Italy's coast guard declares that more than 4,650 migrants are saved off the Libyan coast and 28 bodies recovered, bringing the total number of people rescued in the last 48 hours to nearly 11,000.

October 6th:

The United Nations Security Council unanimously nominates former Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres to be the next Secretary-General, for five years from January 1st 2017.

October 7th:

Russia declares that a draft UN resolution proposed by France for a truce in the Syrian city of Aleppo is unacceptable. Moscow faces growing international pressure to stop the devastating bombardment of the city backed by Russian air power.

October 8th:

In the German city of Chemnitz a Syrian man is hunted by police: he's suspected to be a cell of ISIS and the planner of terroristic attacks in the country.

October 9th:

French President François Hollande declares he is unsure whether to see his Russian counterpart when he visits Paris on October 19th and condemns Vladimir Putin's «unacceptable» support for Syrian air strikes.

October 10th:

The Syrian refugee hunted by German police is arrested in Leipzig: he was ready to strike imminently with attacks similar to those in Brussels and Paris, and he is probably inspired by the Islamic State militant group.

October 11th:

The United States declare they are confident the United Nations will make «significant» progress on tougher sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear program.

October 12th:

The Islamic State claims responsibility for a mass shooting that has killed at least 18 people at a shrine in Kabul.

October 13th:

The European Council President Donald Tusk declares Great Britain could ultimately decide not to leave the European Union as the EU will not offer London any softer terms than a damaging «hard Brexit».

October 14th:

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko agree on more talks are needed before the summit on the Ukraine conflict, which could be held on October 19th between France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine.

October 15th:

During the conference of the youth wing of her Christian Democrats (CDU), German Chancellor Angela Merkel declares that Britain cannot get exceptions from the freedom of movement while retaining full access to the European single market, or other countries would want the same.

October 16th:

Great Britain and the United States declare they are considering additional sanctions against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his supporters, and call on Russia to help end the Syrian conflict.

October 17th:

The European Union condemns Russian air campaign in Syria, saying it may be guilty of war crimes, and it vows to impose more sanctions on President Bashar al-Assad's government.

October 18th:

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announces Russian and Syrian air forces halt for eight hours all air strikes on Aleppo, two days ahead of a planned pause.

October 19th:

In Berlin at a summit between Russian President Valdimir Putin, French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russia is pressed to extend a pause in air strikes on Syria and to halt the «criminal» bombardment of civilians. At the end of a separated meeting on the Ukrainian crisis between Merkel, Hollande, Putin and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko an agreement is established on a preliminary road map for implementing the Minsk peace deal reached in February 2015.

October 20th:

A few hours after the two governments of US and South Korea have agreed to give an effort against the North Korean nuclear threat, North Korea fires a missile that fails immediately after launch.

October 21st:

Islamic State launches a major attack on the city of Kirkuk as Iraqi and Kurdish forces pursue operations to seize territory around Mosul in preparation for an offensive.

October 22nd:

As part of US-backed operations to clear the entrances to Mosul, Iraqi army troops storm into the Christian town of Qaraqosh that has been under Islamic State control since 2014.

October 23rd:

Kurdish fighters declare they have taken the town of Bashiqa, near Mosul, from Islamic State.

October 24th:

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US Secretary of State John Kerry discuss the situation in Syria in a phone call and agree that experts will continue searching for ways to resolve Aleppo crisis.

October 25th:

The European Commission proposes temporary border controls inside the European Union's free-travel zone to cope with the migration crisis. Controls should be extended till a November 15th, 2016.

October 26th:

Great Britain declares it will send fighter jets to Romania in 2017 and the United States promise troops, tanks and artillery to Poland in NATO's biggest military build-up on Russia's borders since the Cold War.

October 27th:

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declares in a press conference that Vladimir Putin's high-profile military deployments aim to showcase Russian power in any global confrontation with the West, but that the Alliance will not seek to match Moscow's actions.

October 28th:

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte declares his government may submit a bill revoking his country's support for the treaty establishing closer ties between the European Union and Ukraine.

October 29th:

Iraqi Shi'ite militias launch an offensive towards the West of Mosul against ISIS's stronghold.

October 30th:

Syrian rebels open a new front in Aleppo as fighting spread on the third day of a major insurgent counter-attack.

October 31st:

Advancing Iraqi troops break through Islamic State defense lines in an eastern suburb of Mosul.

November 1st - 2nd:

Iraqi forces battle Islamic State fighters on the eastern edge of Mosul, entering in the city in a urban warfare.

November 3rd:

The London High Court accepts the appeal of an activists group *pro* EU which asks British Parliament's vote to start the road to Brexit, giving wrong to Theresa May's government that claims the full right to invoke the art. 50 of Lisbon Treaty.

November 4th:

Turkish authorities arrest the leaders of the country's main pro-Kurdish opposition party in a terrorism probe, drawing European and UN condemnation of President Tayyip Erdogan for widening crackdown on dissent.

November 5th:

Iraqi troops advancing towards Mosul battle for the last town left between them and the Islamic State stronghold in the North, which is already under assault from special forces fighting inside the city's eastern districts.

November 6th:

Islamic State faces attack on a new front when US-backed rebels launch a campaign for the Syrian city of Raqqa.

November 7th:

Austria declares it will meet with its Balkan neighbors to discuss what action they might take if a deal with Turkey aimed at restricting the flow of illegal migrants into the European Union collapses.

November 8th:

The Syrian army claims it has taken a strategic district in Aleppo, but rebels declare the battle for the town is not over.

November 9th:

After a surprising outcome, in contrast with the exit polls, the candidate of the Republican Party at the presidential elections Donald J. Trump is elected the 45th President of United States of America.

November 10th:

Iraqi security forces are preparing to advance towards Mosul airport at the city's southern edge, to increase pressure on Islamic State militants fighting troops.

November 11th:

Syrian government troops and their allies advance against rebels in a Western district of Aleppo.

November 12th:

In L'Havana the government of Colombia and FARC reach a new agreement which includes some of the issues requested by the Front but rejected in the October 2nd *referendum*.

November 13th-14th:

Russian President Vladimir Putin warns German Chancellor Angela Merkel of the risk of Ukraine siphoning off Russian gas destined to Europe.

November 15th:

President-elect Donald Trump prepares his staff to the White House, in which appear names of loyalists such as former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and conservative ideologues such as former UN Ambassador John Bolton.

November 16th:

On November 18th European leaders and President Barack Obama will discuss in Berlin about extending sanctions on Russia for its intervention in Ukraine, and imposing new ones for its bombing in Syria.

November 17th:

In Berlin US President Barack Obama, in a press conference with Angela Merkel, declares he hopes the President elected Donald Trump will maintain a constructive approach towards Russia.

November 18th:

In Berlin US President Barack Obama and European leaders underscore the importance of working together at NATO and chide Russia for its bombing of Syria and failure to implement a Ukrainian peace accord.

November 19th:

In Marrakech UN Climate Conference (Cop 22) establishes that within December 2018 will be defined the UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

November 20th:

In Lima at the APEC summit US President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin discuss about Syria and Ukraine, Obama aiming to uphold Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements.

November 21st:

Russia deploys Bastion antinaval missiles in its Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad at the border of Poland and Latvia.

November 22nd:

The President elected Donald Trump exposes his first 100 days' plan, where neither the building of a wall at the border with Mexico neither the abolition of the Obamacare are mentioned. According to the plan, the USA aim to leave the TPP, establishing bilateral agreements, and the Paris agreements on climate change.

November 23rd:

The European Parliament, voting a motion endorsing a Committee report, calls on the EU and its States to do more to counter Russian «disinformation and propaganda warfare», drawing an angry response from President Vladimir Putin.

November 24th:

In Bogotá Colombia's President Juan Manuel Santos and Marxist FARC rebel leader Rodrigo Londono sign a revised peace accord.

November 25th:

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan threatens to unleash a new wave of migrants on Europe after European lawmakers voted for a temporary halt to Turkey's EU membership negotiations.

November 26th:

In L'Havana Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro dies at 90. All the world leaders commemorate his departure.

November 27th:

By a rapid advance in Aleppo, the Syrian army and allied forces split in two parts the most important rebels' urban stronghold.

November 28th:

Norbert Roettgen, ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel, calls for Berlin to impose sanctions on Russia because of its supporting role in the war in Syria.

November 29th:

France and Britain press to sanction Syrian government forces, considered responsible for chemical weapons attacks, though Russia declares it would not support a United Nations Security Council resolution.

November 30th:

UN Undersecretary for Humanitarian affairs Stephen O' Brian begs UN Security Council to move to stop the siege in Aleppo, where its citizens are «risking the extermination».

December 1st:

During his annual speech on the state of the nation, Russian President Vladimir Putin declares: «We don't want confrontation with anyone, we don't need it. We are not seeking and have never sought enemies. We need friends», adding that Russia is ready to cooperate with US new administration on the basis of mutual benefit and equality.

December 2nd:

According to a Europol's report, ISIS may organize new terroristic attacks in Europe, using also car bombs, in US-backed coalition's countries against the Islamic States in Syria and Iraq.

December 3rd:

China lodges a diplomatic protest after US President-elect Donald Trump spoke by phone with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, and blames the self-ruled island Beijing claims as its own for the «petty» move.

December 4th:

The Iranian President Hassan Rohani asks to the US President Barack Obama not to sign the extensions of the American sanctions against his country, underlining that the draft law approved on December 1st by the Senate does not respect the agreement on nuclear of July 2015.

December 5th:

The White House declares it has sought to reassure China after President-elect Donald Trump's phone call with Taiwan's leader, reaffirming Washington's commitment to the 'One China Policy'.

December 6th:

Michel Barnier, the European Union's chief negotiator for the Brexit, sets a target of agreeing a deal with Britain by October 2018, assuming London keeps its promise to formally launch the process of leaving the EU by the end of March 2017.

December 7th:

The Syrian army and allied forces look closer to restoring full control over Aleppo, while Syrian rebels call for an immediate five-day ceasefire for the evacuation of civilians and wounded.

December 8th:

The Syrian army's victory in Aleppo is still firmly in sight and President Bashar al-Assad vows that retaking the nation's second city will change the course of the six-year civil war in his favor.

December 9th:

At the end of the Hamburg summit the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) remains divided over the conflict in Ukraine, with the United States accusing Russia of blocking a common resolution.

December 10th:

Islamic State militants enter the ancient city of Palmyra in Eastern Syria.

December 11th:

British Defense Minister Michael Fallon declares himself to be ready to work with his new US counterpart, but Western nations cannot treat Russia as an equal partner as Moscow is a strategic competitor.

December 12th:

ISIS fighters reconquer Palmira from which they had retreated, because of Russian air force bombings.

December 13th:

Rebel resistance in Aleppo ends as insurgents have agreed to withdraw in a ceasefire.

December 14th:

US President Barack Obama signs the act on the extension of sanctions against Iran for 10 years more: the act enters into force but without his consensus.

December 15th:

European Union leaders agree to the additional Dutch demands concerning the agreement establishing closer ties with Ukraine.

December 16th:

The evacuation from the last opposition-held areas of the Syrian city of Aleppo is suspended because pro-government militias have demanded that wounded people should also be brought out of two Shi'ite villages besieged by rebel fighters.

December 17th:

China will return an underwater US drone seized in the South China Sea by one of its naval vessel, that US President-elect Donald Trump has accused Beijing of having stolen. But China complains that Washington has been «hying up» the incident.

December 18th:

Jordanian security forces free tourists trapped inside a medieval castle in Karak after storming the building where armed men have killed at least nine people.

December 19th:

The Russian Ambassador to Turkey Andrei Karlov is killed, while he was giving a speech at an Ankara art gallery, by an off-duty police officer shouting «Don't forget Aleppo» and «Allah Akbar».

December 20th:

German authorities release a Pakistani asylum-seeker, suspected of driving a truck into a Christmas market in Berlin on December 19th's night and killing 12 people, due to a lack of evidence and the Interior Minister declares that the real perpetrator may still be on the run.

December 21st:

German police is looking for an asylum-seeker from Tunisia whose an identity document under the driver's seat of the truck that ploughed into the Christmas market in Berlin. The Islamic State claims the terroristic attack.

December 22nd:

The Syrian army declares to have retaken complete control of Aleppo after the evacuation from the city of the last rebel fighters, handing President Bashar al-Assad his biggest victory in the war.

December 23rd:

In Milan Italian police shoots dead the man who was believed responsible for the Berlin Christmas market truck attack, 24-year-old Tunisian Anis Amri.

December 24th:

The Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari announces that Boko Hara's militias are expelled by the Nigerian army from their last stronghold in Sambisa's forest.

December 25th:

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu summons the US ambassador to Israel to discuss about the US abstention vote in the UN Security Council resolution demanding to end the settlement-building.

December 26th-27th:

According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, Russian militias in Syria have found common graves in Aleppo.

December 28th:

Russia and Turkey reach an agreement for a ceasefire in Syria to be approved by Damascus and the Syrian opposition groups.

December 29th:

Iraqi security forces begin the second phase of their offensive against the Islamic State militants in Mosul, pushing from three directions into the Eastern districts.

December 30th:

Russian President Vladimir Putin refrains from retaliating the expulsion of 35 suspected after Russian spies ordered by US President Barack Obama, who has imposed sanctions on two Russian intelligence agencies over their involvement in hacking political groups in the November 8th US presidential elections.

December 31st:

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani agree to continue their close coordination to end the Syria crisis.