

Quarterly Review of International Relations

July-September 2020

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July 1st:

The German presidency of EU starts with an ambitious program, for a Union: «more equal and supportive, stronger in the world and so more sovereign, due to the re-launch of Europe and not to its reconstruction» as declared by the German Ambassador in Italy Viktor Elbling.

July 2nd:

In Russia the outcome of the referendum wanted by President Vladimir Putin to legitimize the changes in the Constitution permits him to govern, if he wants, until 2036.

Hong Kong police arrests 24-year-old man at the airport on suspicion of stabbing and wounding an officer during a demonstration against a new national security law imposed by Beijing.

July 3rd:

Jean Castex is appointed by the President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron as new French Prime Minister after the resignation of Edouard Philippe.

Tong Ying-kit is the 24-years-old man accused of intentional collision with his motorbike of a group of police officers and he is the first person to be accused in a formal way in line with the new act on the national security imposed to Hong Kong by China.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel solicits once again a quick agreement in the European Union on the Recovery Fund, underlining that: «the road is still bumpy and we will deserve availability to reach a compromise».

July 4th:

China fires back at Canada for criticizing Beijing's national security law for Hong Kong, after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has declared that Canada is suspending its extradition treaty with Hong Kong due to the law.

July 5th:

According to the Israeli army Palestinians send three rockets from the Gaza Strip on Israeli territory. At the origin of the attack there are tensions connected to the annexation plan of the West Bank.

July 6th:

Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab declares that Britain's first sanctions will target 25 Russian nationals it says were involved in the mistreatment and death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky and 20 Saudi nationals held to be involved in the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

China reserves the right to adopt «further measures» against Canada for its decision to suspend the extradition treaty and the export of military material.

July 7th:

European shares fall as surging US coronavirus cases and forecasts for a deeper-than-feared recession in the euro zone dim optimism around a post-pandemic rebound, with the pan-European STOXX 600 index slipping 0.6%.

Brasilian President Jair Bolsonaro confirms to be positive to the coronavirus test, causing a deep shock in all the country.

July 8th:

With a notification letter sent to the United Nations US President Donald Trump declares that the United States will retreat from the World Health Organization with effect since July 6th 2021, because of the notice obligation of one year.

July 9th:

To the British journal «The Financial Times» the President of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde declares that the Recovery Fund of 750 billion euros to support the most hit countries by the pandemic could be agreed by the States of the European Union after the summit to be held on July 18th.

Australia decides to stop its extradition agreement with Hong Kong after the adoption of the new law on national security by China.

July 10th:

The President of the European Council Charles Michel proposes to keep intact the Recovery Fund at 750 billion euros and to confirm the proportion of non-refundable transfers and loans respectively at 500 and 250 billions.

Emmanuel Macron asks to the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to give up any project of annexation of Palestine territories.

July 11th:

In an interview published by «Die Welt» the European Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni declares that Europe needs the Recovery Fund «quickly» and expresses his trust in the compromise ability of Angela Merkel.

July 12th:

In an interview to the Austrian broadcast Fas Chancellor Sebastian Kurz declares he wants to be sure that the aids of the Recovery Fund would be correctly invested and that: «a Union of debts with us will not be possible».

July 13th:

After a meeting in Berlin between Angela Merkel and the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on the Recovery Fund the German Chancellor declares that: «The opinions are still in part divergent but I think that we will reach an agreement».

July 14th:

The United States rejects China's claims to offshore resources in most of the South China Sea, drawing criticism from China which says the US position raises tension in the region.

July 15th:

During a press conference at the White House Donald Trump declares to have signed an act, unanimously approved by the Congress, that applies sanctions to Chinese officials who use the new rules of repressive security in Hong Kong and to the banks working with them. The US President adds to have signed an executive order that puts an end to the preferential treatment for Hong Kong after the Chinese 'crunch'.

July 16th:

British government led by Boris Johnson sustains, through declarations by Dominic Raab, that: «Russian actors almost certainly tried to interfere in the 2019 politic elections through the online amplification of government documents, illicitly acquired».

July 17th:

In Brussels takes place the extraordinary European Council. Dutch premier Mark Rutte declares that: «The possibility of an agreement is less of 50%» but the President of the European Council Charles Michel is convinced that an understanding is possible. According to Giuseppe Conte: «The red line is the efficient EU answer». Angela Merkel asks that: «Everyone compromises»; the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen sustains that: «A solution is possible». Emmanuel Macron declares that: «Our European project is in the game».

July 18th:

Mark Rutte, supported by the so-called 'Frugal Countries' (Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Finland) insists with the request of conditioning the supply of the aids of the Recovery Fund to the single member States to the European Council unanimity: for Italy this is an «unacceptable» request, because it doesn't permit to unlock the agreement.

July 19th:

At the EU summit on the Recovery Fund and the 2021-2027 budget, meetings to find a mediation of the different positions follow one another. The compromise on the aids equipment should be a decrease under the line of 400 billion euros. But for the 'Frugal Countries' this sum is still too high and there is a long distance between the States during the negotiations.

July 20th:

The 'Frugal Countries' leaders are open to the chance to agree on aids of 390 billion euros for the Recovery Fund that Charles Michel is preparing for the plenary of the summit which will go on indefinitely.

July 21st:

EU leaders reach an historical agreement on the Recovery Fund and the EU budget for 2021-2027 at the end of a negotiation four days and four nights long. It is the longest countries, in the European Union history. The Fund has a supply of 750 billion euros, including 390 billions of aids. The budget is fixed at 1074 billions. For the first time since its foundation the EU establishes a financial solidarity and creates a common debt granted with its 1074 billions budget for an economic stimulus of 1800 billions.

July 22nd:

An expected report of British Parliamentary Commission on Intelligence led by Julian Lewis sustains that the United Kingdom is in the crosshairs of Vladimir Putin's Russia and, if there are not concrete proofs of significant electoral interferences, it is only because it was not sufficiently investigated on suspects.

July 23rd:

From the base of Wenchang, on Hainan Island, it is launched the Chinese probe Tianwen 1 going on Mars and becoming the first Chinese vehicle to enter in the red planet orbit. In this way China enters in the new run to Mars, after the launch of Arab Emirates' probe Hope and coming before the new NASA rover launch called Perseverance.

July 24th:

The United States order the closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston for espionage activity on the basis of the incrimination made by the Department of Justice on July 23rd of 4 Chinese researchers, accused to be part of a net organized by Beijing to infiltrate in US institutions and to stole scientific and technological information. Three of them have been arrested and one took refuge in the Chinese consulate of San Francisco. Chinese government retaliates declaring to the USA to close their consulate in the city of Chengdu.

July 25th:

A Singaporean citizen declares to be guilty in the USA to work as a secret agent for China: Jun Wei Yeo has been accused to use his activity of political consultant in the country as a facade to get information for Chinese intelligence.

July 26th:

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un declares emergency and lockdown in a border town after a person, suspected of being infected with the novel coronavirus, returned from South Korea after illegally crossing the border.

July 27th:

The European Union's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier expresses confidence at a closed-door meeting with member State envoys to the bloc that a new deal with Great Britain is possible.

July 28th:

During the celebrations of the 67th anniversary of the end of the 1950-1953 Korean War, Kim Jong-un declares that North Korea will not have any other war thanks to the possession of atomic weapons which assure security and future despite continuous external pressure and military threats, and that his country has developed nuclear weapons to get «absolute force» and to avoid another conflict.

July 29th:

During a press conference to the White House Donald Trump affirms that: «Germany is not paying the right quote to NATO, it is taking advantage on this» and that the United States will retire 11.900 soldiers from Germany, half of them will come back to the US and the other half will be divided in other European countries, including Italy and Belgium.

July 30th:

Hong Kong disqualifies a dozen pro-democracy candidates from running in the Parliament's elections to be held on September 6th 2020, citing reasons including collusion with foreign forces and opposition to the new China-imposed national security laws.

July 31st:

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announces that political elections to be held on September 6th are postponed because of the Covid-19 emergency, declaring during a press conference a «serious pandemic situation» in the former British colony, adding that she has got: «the support in the adoption of this difficult decision» of Beijing central government.

August 1st:

United Arab Emirates announce the start of their first nuclear compound, the first one in the Arab world, built in Barakah, close to the city of Braka, on the Persian Gulf.

August 2nd:

In Hong Kong seven Chinese health officials arrive, the first members of a 60-person team that will carry out widespread COVID-19 testing in the territory as it races to halt a third wave of illness. The initiative marks the first time mainland health officials assist Hong Kong in its battle to control the epidemic.

August 3th:

China vows to retaliate if the United States persist with «hostile action» against Chinese journalists who may be forced to leave in coming days if their US visas are not extended. Chinese foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin tells reporters at a daily briefing that no Chinese journalist in the United States has been granted a visa extension since the United States, on May 11th, limited their stay to 90 days, with an option to extend.

August 4th-5th:

Lebanese Health Minister Hamad Hasan advises to go away from Beirut, devastated by two powerful explosions which have caused at least 100 deaths and 4000 wounded, affirming that dangerous materials in the air after deflagration could have mortal effects in the long term. To cause the explosions was a fire in a deposit in the Beirut harbour where there were stocked 2750 tons of ammonium nitrate, impounded many years ago from a ship.

August 6th:

In a call with Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe US Defense Secretary Mark Esper expresses concerns about Beijing's «destabilizing» activity near Taiwan and the South China Sea.

August 7th:

The United States impose sanctions on Carrie Lam, the Hong Kong's current and former police chiefs and eight other top officials for what Washington says is their role in curtailing political freedoms in the territory.

August 8th:

Hong Kong Minister of Commerce Edward Yau declares that Washington decision to impose sanctions against Hong Kong officials is «wild and unresponsive».

August 9th:

Lebanese police fire tear gas to try to disperse rock-throwing protesters blocking a road near Parliament in Beirut, in a second day of anti-government demonstrations triggered by the devastating explosion of August 4th. Two government ministers resign amid the political fallout of the blast and months of economic crisis, saying the government has failed to reform.

August 10th:

China imposes sanctions on 11 US citizens including legislators in response to the US imposition of sanctions on 11 Hong Kong and Chinese officials accused of curtailing political freedoms in the former British colony.

August 11th:

In Belarus at least 2000 persons are arrested while since August 2nd mass protests take place against the controversial re-election to the presidency of Aleksandr Lukashenko and clashes between police and protesters. In the meantime Poland says it is ready to mediation while candidate Svetlana Tichanovskaya is in Lithuania. The European Union declares that: «violence is not the answer».

August 12th:

New clashes with a toll of at least 51 wounded people, take place in various cities in Belarus during protests against the re-election of Aleksandr Lukashenko. Police uses tear gas, coshes, stun grenade and rubber bullets and also fire guns in Brest.

August 13th:

Israel and the United Arab Emirates announce an agreement that will lead to a full normalization of diplomatic relations between the two States. Under the accord, which Donald Trump has helped broker, Israel agrees to suspend annexing areas of the occupied West Bank. It also firms up opposition to regional power Iran, which the UAE, Israel and the United States view as the main threat in the conflict-riven region.

August 14th:

The high EU representative Joseph Borrell declares that the European Union does not accept electoral results in Belarus and wants to impose sanctions for the guilty parties of violence on protesters and electoral frauds.

August 15th:

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani declares that United Arab Emirates has made a «huge mistake» in reaching a deal toward normalizing ties with Israel, in a speech furiously condemning what he called a betrayal by the Gulf state.

August 16th:

Belarusians chanting «Step down!» fill the centre of the capital Minsk in the biggest protest so far against what they say is the fraudulent re-election of longtime president Aleksandr Lukashenko.

August 17th:

Aleksandr Lukashenko declares he will be ready to hold new elections and hand over power after a constitutional referendum, an attempt to pacify mass protests and strikes that pose the biggest challenge yet to his rule.

August 18th:

In Mali a group of troopers arrests President Boubacar Keita and premier Boubou Cisse in a *golpe* in course.

August 19th:

At the end of a special summit held in conference call Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen declare that the elections of August 9th in Belarus have been not only not free, incorrect and not responsive to international standards but also faked and that the European Union will impose sanctions against the persons in charge of the violence and civil rights violations in the country.

August 20th:

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny is fighting for his life in a Siberian hospital after drinking tea that is considered may be laced with poison. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov declares that Russian authorities will open an investigation to establish if Navalny would have been poisoned.

August 21st:

Libyan President of national agreement government Fayez al-Serraj and the one of the Tobruk Parliament Aguila Saleh announce the end of the hostility «all over the territory» and the recovery of the political process that: «would bring to new elections on March 2021».

August 22nd:

Alexei Navalny is evacuated to Germany for medical treatment, flown out of the Siberian city of Omsk in an ambulance aircraft and taken to a hospital in Berlin.

August 23rd:

In Minsk tens of thousands of protesters demanding Alexander Lukashenko step down defy a warning from the military and flood into the streets briefly gathering near the president's residence, before dispersing peacefully.

August 24th:

Angela Merkel calls on Russia to investigate the suspected poisoning of Alexei Navalny and holds the perpetrators accountable after doctors have found indications of a toxic substance in his body.

August 25th:

Hassan Rouhani declares that if the United States want an agreement with Iran, they must first come back to Teheran's 2015 nuclear deal with six powers that Washington has abandoned on 2018.

The Kremlin declares it hopes Alexei Navalny's illness will not damage Russia's ties with the West and that it is keen to find out why he feels ill despite declining to open an investigation over the incident.

August 26th-27th:

Aleksandr Lukashenko announces to be ready to establish a dialogue with trade union collectives, students and opposition «reasonable» members but sustains that this will not happen under the pressure of mass protests.

August 28th:

Japan's premier Shinzo Abe resigns because of poor health, ending a tenure as the country's longest-serving prime minister in which he has sought to revive an economy stricken by deflation and push for a stronger military.

August 29th:

In Berlin police breaks up a mass protest against coronavirus curbs and arrests 300 in the German capital after demonstrators have failed to keep their distance and wear masks as instructed.

August 30th:

Belarusians chanting «Happy Birthday, you rat» and flying red-and-white opposition flags gather near Aleksandr Lukashenko's residence as protesters keep up pressure on the veteran leader to resign, before dispersing peacefully.

August 31st:

In Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates State Minister Anwar Mohammed Gargash meets the Israeli delegation chief, National Security Counselor Meir Ben Shabbat to start peace talks to which takes part also Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's advisor.

September 1st:

The United States are considering imposing sanctions on seven Belarusians they believe were involved in falsifying the August 9th election and in violence against peaceful protesters.

September 2nd:

Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei declares that his country will impose travel bans on senior officials in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in retaliation for measures targeting its own officials, as Russia has stepped up support for the Belarusian government.

September 3rd:

Russia declares the West should not rush to judge it over the poisoning of Alexei Navalny and that there are no grounds to accuse it of the crime, speaking a day after Angela Merkel has sustained that Navalny has been poisoned with a Soviet-style Novichok nerve agent in an attempt to murder him and that she would consult NATO allies about how to respond.

September 4th:

After a meeting at the White House with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovar premier Avdullah Hoti, Donald Trump announces that Serbia commits to move its embassy to Jerusalem in July 2021 and it is the first European country to make a decision like that. During the meeting in Washington it is decided also the normalization of relations and the creation of diplomatic relationships between Kosovo and Israel.

September 5th:

In the center of Minsk takes place a protest march by women, named as women's peace march, against the consequences of Lukashenko's re-election because of violence followed to it.

September 6th:

German Foreign Affairs Minister Heiko Maas declares that Germany, which actually chairs the European Union, will launch dialogues on possible sanctions against Russia if Moscow will not give any explanation for the poisoning of Alexei Navalny.

September 7th:

British government calls the Russian ambassador in London to solicit investigations on the attempted poisoning of Alexei Navalny, caused, according to German authorities, by a neurotoxin of Novichok type.

September 8th:

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urges Russia to start, or to cooperate with, « a complete, transparent investigation, to be independent and impartial» on the case of

Alexei Navalny, after that German experts have declared to have «unequivocal proofs» that he has been poisoned by a Novichock nervin agent.

September 9th:

Great Britain plunges Brexit trade talks into crisis by explicitly acknowledging it could break international law by ignoring some parts of its European Union divorce treaty, prompting a rapid rebuke from the Union.

September 10th:

An act presented on September 9th to the British Parliament by Boris Johnson's government has rejected the Brexit agreement reached at the end of 2019, which established that Northern Ireland could remain in the single market to avoid the return of a fixed border with the Southern Irish Republic. But Johnson does not want to accept the separation of Northern Ireland by the rest of Great Britain. The European Union declares that or London will retire until the end of September this act or it will start a legal action to the European Justice Court, that could be ending with the imposition of sanctions for the British.

September 11th:

British International Trade Minister Liz Truss announces that between Japan and Great Britain is reached the first bilateral trade agreement with a third country on the background of Brexit: an understanding of principle on a free trade treaty to work at the end of post Brexit transition, since 2021.

September 12th:

Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu declare that after the entente between Israel and the Arab Emirates, which will be signed on September 15th, also Bahrein will sign a friendship agreement with Israel.

September 13th:

At least 100,000 Belarusian protesters take to the streets of Minsk in one of the biggest demonstrations yet against the re-election of Aleksandr Lukashenko.

September 14th:

Boris Johnson declares a bill that will break international law by breaching parts of the Brexit divorce deal is needed because the European Union has not taken a «revolver off the table» in trade talks.

September 15th:

At the White House the leaders of Israel, Arab Emirates and Bahrein sign agreements that, as declared by Donald Trump, «no one thought they can be possible». US President adds that: «other five or six Arab countries will soon sign deals with Israel for the normalization of their relations».

September 16th:

In her closure speech at the European Parliament Ursula von der Leyen declares that the Dublin regulation will be changed with a new European governance in the management of migrations, will have a common structure for asylum and repatriations and also a strong and incisive solidarity mechanism, adding that: «we must build a health care union».

September 17th:

In the Siberian city of Tomsk is detected the nerve agent used to poison Alexei Navalny, found on an empty water bottle from his hotel room, suggesting he has been poisoned there and not at the airport as first thought.

September 18th:

Belarus opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya demands an international mission to document what she has called «atrocities» during crackdowns on anti-government protests, but she declares she is ready for talks to end violence.

September 19th:

In central Minsk Belarusian police detains hundreds of protesters, as around 2.000 people march across the city demanding that Alexander Lukashenko step down.

September 20th:

US State secretary Mike Pompeo affirms on Twitter that: «Two years ago the Holy See has reached an agreement with Chinese Communist Party in the hope to help Catholics in China. But the abuse of the

CCP on worshippers is only worsened. The Vatican would put in danger its moral authority if it will renew the deal».

September 21st:

According to Mike Pompeo UN sanctions against Iran come back; US State secretary underlines that the USA are expecting that all UN member States will respect their commitment to apply them. The answer of the Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad comes soon, affirming that the imminent restoration of UN sanctions against Iran is a «false declaration of Washington».

September 22nd:

German Minister for European Affairs Michael Roth declares to the British government: «Please London friends stop playing, time is running out and we need a realistic base on which make negotiations». Roth is representing the presidency of the EU during the meeting of General Affairs Council which is taking stock of the situation also on Brexit negotiations.

September 23rd:

Ursula von der Leyen on the new Pact on asylum and migration declares: «Today we propose a European solution to rebuild the trust between member States and to recreate citizens' trust in our ability to manage as Union». The Pact considers an obligatory and permanent solidarity between member States whose mechanism will be regulated by a system of «flexible contribution».

September 24th:

Javier Borrell declares that: «The oat of Alexander Lukashenko looses every democratic legitimation because the EU does not recognize the false results of the elections».

September 25th:

In Paris's rue Nicolas-Appert the stabbing of two people brings violence back to the street where, on January 7th 2015, Islamist militants had killed 12 people in the offices of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

September 26^h:

In Paris police quickly detains the man suspected of carrying out the attack of September 25th. He is from Pakistan and has arrived in France in 2017 as an unaccompanied minor, as declared by Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin. He is cooperating with the police and tells he has targeted Charlie Hebdo.

September 27th:

In Caucasus, between Armenia and Azerbaijan, there is fighting in the autonomous region of Nagorno Karabakh, where the Armenian army bombs the sites of Armenian separatist forces, attacked in the night, and launches a counteroffensive.

September 28th:

In Switzerland as the outcome of the referendum held on September 27th citizens reject the initiative of the sovereign right to put an end to free circulation of people with the EU.

September 29th:

In Vilnius Emmanuel Macron meets Svetlana Tikhanovskaya and promises that European Union will try to mediate Belarusian political crisis.

September 30th:

During his visit in Italy to meet Vatican State Secretary Pietro Parolin, Mike Pompeo meets Giuseppe Conte, focusing on the bilateral and international collaboration against Covid-19, the crisis in the Mediterranean area and the relations with China.