

# Quarterly Review of International Relations

## October-December 2020

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### **October 1<sup>st</sup>:**

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declares that: «European Commission has sent to the United Kingdom a letter of formal notice because of violation of its obligations in the Brexit agreement». This signs the beginning of an infraction formal procedure against Great Britain which within November 1<sup>st</sup> must answer to the letter.

### **October 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

The written procedure of the European Union to adopt sanctions against Belarusian Aleksandr Lukashenko regime is perfected with the publication of the names of 40 subjects hit by restrictions (prohibition of trips in Europe and freezing of goods) on European Official Gazette.

### **October 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

US President Donald Trump, hospitalized in precaution because of coronavirus infection, to which tampon he has resulted being positive with First Lady Melania on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, declares to feel good as if he could already be dismissed.

### **October 4<sup>th</sup>:**

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson confirms that London wants to reach a post Brexit agreement with the European Union but that it must take in account British requests, and if this would not happen that: «the United Kingdom will be able to live with this eventuality».

### **October 5<sup>th</sup>:**

Azeri President Ilham Aliyev affirms that Turkey should be involved more actively in the peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh, being: «a strong country, close to Armenia and South Caucasus, so it must be more active in this situation».

### **October 6<sup>th</sup>:**

European Court of Justice rejects national laws which impose indiscriminate collection and preservation of personal datas by telecommunications societies and by the technological ones operating in this sector, confirming that the EU law is opposed to this type of disposition with the exception of justified reasons for «serious threat to national security».

### **October 7<sup>th</sup>:**

France, United States and Russia will step up efforts to end fighting between Azeri and ethnic Armenian forces in the South Caucasus by holding talks in Geneva on October 8<sup>th</sup>, as fears of a regional war grow.

### **October 8<sup>th</sup>:**

The United States slap fresh sanctions on Iran's financial sector, targeting 18 Iranian banks in an effort to further shut Iran out of the global banking system as Washington ramps up pressure on Tehran weeks ahead of the US election.

### **October 9<sup>th</sup>:**

European Union chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier wants a few more concessions from Britain before entering the last intense phase of negotiations on a trade deal, as the October 15<sup>th</sup> deadline looms.

### **October 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>:**

Armenia and Azerbaijan accuse each other of swiftly and seriously violating the terms of a ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh, raising questions about how meaningful the truce, brokered by Russia, will turn out to be.

### **October 12<sup>th</sup>:**

At the end of Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg the EU High Representative Josep Borrell declares that on the case of poisoning of Russia opposition leader Alexei Navalny: «we have discussed

on how to make effective French-German proposal on restrictive measures against persons in charge of the attempt of murder. There is a political agreement to realize these measures that will be done by the political authority of the Council».

**October 13<sup>th</sup>:**

The European Union demands «substantive» movement from Britain on fisheries, dispute settlement and guarantees of fair competition in their talks on a post-Brexit trade deal, with Germany saying they are at a «critical stage».

**October 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Russia and the United States remain at odds over extending the last major arms control pact between the world's largest nuclear weapons powers (the New START - Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty - signed in 2010 and expired on February 2020), with Moscow denying US assertions of an agreement in principle.

**October 15<sup>th</sup>:**

Hopes of a humanitarian ceasefire ending fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh sink as the death toll mounts and Armenia and Azerbaijan accuse each other of launching new attacks.

**October 16<sup>th</sup>:**

Boris Johnson declares it is time to prepare for a no-trade deal Brexit unless the European Union fundamentally changes course, bluntly telling Brussels that there is no point in talking any more.

**October 17<sup>th</sup>:**

Armenia and Azerbaijan declare they agree to a new humanitarian ceasefire from midnight in fighting over Azerbaijan's ethnic Armenian-controlled enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

**October 18<sup>th</sup>:**

In Manama, Bahrain's capital, Israel and Bahrain sign a joint statement that will start bilateral relations between the two countries after the signature of the Abraham Agreement held on September 2020 at the White House.

**October 19<sup>th</sup>:**

Bolivia's new President is Luis Arce, the candidate of the Movement to Socialism (Mas). Arce has been twice Minister of Economy in Morales governments from 2006 to 2017 and in 2019.

**October 20<sup>th</sup>:**

Armenia and Azerbaijan declare their foreign ministers would meet US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Washington on October 23rd in efforts to end the fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh.

**October 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>:**

Great Britain will resume talks with the European Union on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, marking a new push by the two sides to protect billions of dollars worth of trade from the beginning of 2021.

**October 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

At Geneva's UN headquarter at the end of talks of Conjunct Military Commission 5+5 it is reached an agreement on a permanent ceasefire in whole Libya.

**October 24<sup>th</sup>:**

Donald Trump votes in advance, without First Lady Melania, in West Palm Beach (Florida), close to his residence of Mar-a-Lago.

**October 25<sup>th</sup>:**

In Minsk Belarusian police uses stun grenades against protesters as tens of thousands of people head towards Independence Palace demanding that President Alexander Lukashenko resign.

**October 26<sup>th</sup>:**

Turkish leader Tayyip Erdogan asks his compatriots to stop buying French goods in the latest expression of anger in the Muslim world over images being displayed in France of the Prophet Mohammad, which some Muslims consider blasphemous.

**October 27<sup>th</sup>:**

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urges Armenia and Azerbaijan to pursue a diplomatic solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as fighting in and around the mountain enclave enters a second month, defying a ceasefire brokered in Washington.

**October 28<sup>th</sup>:**

Tayyip Erdogan declares that Western countries mocking Islam want to «relaunch the Crusades», heightening a confrontation with France over cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad that have stirred anger in Muslim-majority countries.

**October 29<sup>th</sup>:**

In the French city of Nice a knife-wielding attacker shouting «*Allahu Akbar*» (God is Greatest) beheads a woman and kills two other people at a church. President of French Republic Emmanuel Macron, declaring that France is been subject to an Islamist terrorist attack, says he will deploy thousands more soldiers to protect key French sites, such as places of worship and schools.

**October 30<sup>th</sup>:**

France steps up security nationwide to guard against Islamist attacks after the fatal stabbings at a church in Nice, while protests flare in parts of the Middle East, Asia and Africa over French caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad.

**October 31<sup>st</sup>:**

In Lion an Orthodox priest is wounded by a shotgun. The attacker is runaway but French authorities suspect of a new Islamist attack.

**November 1<sup>st</sup>:**

Two more men are arrested in connection with the knife attack that has left three dead at a church in Nice, bringing the number of people in custody to six as investigators look at the suspected assailant's last known contacts.

**November 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

In central Vienna 15 people are injured and 7 dead amid exchanges of gunfire during what the Austrian Interior Ministry defines to be a terroristic attack placed in six different points of the city.

**November 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

ISIS claims the attack in Vienna while the death toll grows with at least 4 civilians, besides the attacker killed by Austrian police, and 17 injured. Four persons are arrested because of their connection with the terroristic act.

**November 4<sup>th</sup>:**

A day after Americans voted in a bitterly contested presidential election between the Democratic Joe Biden and Donald Trump, there are millions of votes still to count and the race to the White House is risking days or even weeks of legal uncertainty.

**November 5<sup>th</sup>:**

After the spate of Islamist attacks in France and Austria Emmanuel Macron declares that Europe must rethink its open-border Schengen area, including a more robust protection of the zone's external frontiers.

**November 6<sup>th</sup>:**

Austria admits «intolerable mistakes» in the handling of intelligence on the jihadist who killed people in Vienna, saying it could have considered him a greater threat and monitored him more closely.

**November 7<sup>th</sup>:**

Some of the United States' biggest and closest allies quickly congratulate Joe Biden, recognizing his presidential election victory even though Donald Trump, with whom several have had rocky relations, has yet to concede.

**November 8<sup>th</sup>:**

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev announces in a broadcasting message to the nation that his country's military forces have taken control of the strategic city of Shusha, in Nagorno-Karabakh. But he is suddenly denied by Armenian government according to which, otherwise, the battle continues.

**November 9<sup>th</sup>:**

Emily Murphy, nominated by Donald Trump in 2007 chief of General Service Administration, refuses to send a letter which should let to the transition team of elected President Joe Biden start formally its work. In the meantime Biden nominates a new anti Covid task force, formed by 13 members.

**November 10<sup>th</sup>:**

Russian peacekeeping troops deploy to Nagorno-Karabakh under a deal that halts six weeks of fighting between Azeri and ethnic Armenian forces and freezes territorial gains by Azerbaijan.

**November 11<sup>th</sup>:**

Hong Kong's pro-democracy opposition lawmakers declare they would resign in protest against the dismissal of four of their colleagues from the city assembly after Beijing have given local authorities new powers to further curb dissent.

**November 12<sup>th</sup>:**

Russia and Turkey sign a memorandum on the creation of the Turkish-Russian Conjoint center to monitor the respect of the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh after the dialogues between Russian Defence Minister Serghei Shoigu and its Turkish counterpart Hulusi Akar.

**November 13<sup>th</sup>:**

The man suspected of knifing to death three people in a church in the French city of Nice has on his telephone pictures of the man who has beheaded a middle school teacher near Paris 13 days earlier, indicating thus a common motive behind the two attacks.

**November 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Citing intelligence officials, «The New York Times» reports that Al Qaeda's second-in-command Abu Muhammad al-Masri, accused of helping to mastermind the 1998 bombings of two US embassies in Africa, has been killed in Iran in August by Israeli operatives acting at the behest of the United States.

**November 15<sup>th</sup>:**

Peru's *interim* president Manuel Merino comes under growing pressure to resign after more than half his new cabinet has stepped down following the deaths of two people in protests over the sudden ouster of his predecessor, Martin Vizcarra.

**November 16<sup>th</sup>:**

In Beijing 15 countries of the Asian-Pacific area sign the world biggest free trade agreement, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which includes ASEAN's ten economies with China, Japan, South Korea, New Zeland and Australia, representing at least 30% of the global GDP.

**November 17<sup>th</sup>:**

Ethiopia declares its troops are marching on the capital of the Tigray region after a deadline for rebel forces to surrender has passed in a two-week conflict shaking the Horn of Africa and alarming the world.

**November 18<sup>th</sup>:**

The United States impose sweeping new sanctions targeting Iran, blacklisting a foundation controlled by its supreme leader *ayatollah* Ali Khamenei and taking aim at what Washington calls Iran's human rights abuses a year after the deadly crackdown on anti-government demonstrators.

**November 19<sup>th</sup>:**

Mike Pompeo becomes the first US Secretary of State to visit an Israeli West Bank settlement and the Golan Heights, in a show of solidarity that leads Palestinians to accuse him of helping to cement Israeli control over occupied territory.

**November 20<sup>th</sup>:**

European Council Commissioner on Human Rights Dunja Mijatovic declares that the amendments to the Hungarian Constitution and other laws presented by Hungarian government to the Parliament could have serious negative effects on human rights and mining the rule of law, inviting Hungarian lawmakers to postpone the vote on the legislative package.

**November 21<sup>st</sup>:**

The Ethiopian government rebuffs an African effort to mediate, saying its troops have seized another town in their march towards the rebel-held capital of Northern Tigray region.

**November 22<sup>nd</sup>:**

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed gives Tigrayan regional forces 72 hours to surrender before the military begins an offensive on the regional capital of Mekellè.

**November 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu travels to Saudi Arabia and meets its crown prince Mohammed bin Salman and Mike Pompeo in what would be the first publicly confirmed visit in the Arab kingdom by an Israeli leader as the countries close ranks against Iran.

**November 24<sup>th</sup>:**

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission accuses a Tigrayan youth group of killing hundreds of civilians as federal and local forces both claim advances in a three-week war in the country's mountainous North.

**November 25<sup>th</sup>:**

Arms control advocates are urging Joe Biden to extend the last US-Russian treaty limiting deployed strategic nuclear arms for five years, but some experts argue the US president-elect should go for a shorter period to maintain leverage over Moscow.

**November 26<sup>th</sup>:**

Abiy Ahmed declares that the Ethiopian military will begin the «final phase» of an offensive in the Northern Tigray region, after an ultimatum expired for Tigrayan forces to surrender.

**November 27<sup>th</sup>:**

The European Union and Great Britain declare there are still substantial differences over a Brexit trade deal as Michel Barnier prepares to travel to London in a last-ditch attempt to avoid a tumultuous finale to the five-year Brexit crisis.

**November 28<sup>th</sup>:**

Ali Khamenei pledges to continue the work of top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who Western and Israeli governments believe has been the architect of a secret Iranian nuclear weapons programme, retaliating for his killing, occurred according to the Ayatollah at the hand of Israel on November 27<sup>th</sup>.

**November 29<sup>th</sup>:**

The Ethiopian government launches a manhunt for leaders of a rebellious faction in the Northern region of Tigray after announcing federal troops have taken over the regional capital Mekellè and military operations have been completed.

**November 30<sup>th</sup>:**

Australian premier Scott Morrison asks official excuses to China and the removal of a retouched photo, posted on Twitter by the spokesman of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zhao Lijian, where an Australian soldier is shown slaughtering a young Afghan citizen. The image is published after the exit of a report on crimes committed by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan.

**December 1<sup>st</sup>:**

In Treviri there are at least four victims run over by a car which has invested many people in the pedestrian zone. German authorities don't have any proofs of political motivations at the origin of the attack.

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

In the strategy of re launch of Transatlantic relations of the European Commission, presented by the High EU Representative Josep Borrell it is declared that the common commitment of the EU and the United States is: «essential in a world where authoritarian powers try to subvert democracies».

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

US State Department declares that Donald Trump's administration has issued rules to restrict travel to the United States by Chinese Communist Party members and their families.

**December 4<sup>th</sup>:**

A confidential International Atomic Energy Agency report tells that Iran plans to install hundreds more advanced uranium-enriching centrifuges at an underground plant in breach of its deal with major powers, a move that will raise pressure on US President-elect Joe Biden.

**December 5<sup>th</sup>:**

Boris Johnson and Ursula von der Leyen declare that Brexit negotiation will start again on December 6th in Bruxelles trying to reach an agreement.

**December 6<sup>th</sup>:**

British Minister of Environment George Eustice declares that: «negotiations on Brexit are at a very difficult point, it is useless to deny it».

**December 7<sup>th</sup>:**

The United States impose financial sanctions and a travel ban on 14 Chinese officials over their alleged role in Beijing's disqualification in November 2020 of elected opposition legislators in Hong Kong.

**December 8<sup>th</sup>:**

US Treasury Department declares that United States has blacklisted six companies, including several based in China, and four ships accused of illicit exports of North Korean coal.

**December 9<sup>th</sup>:**

Boris Johnson warns the European Union it must scrap demands which he says are unacceptable if there is to be a Brexit trade deal to avoid a turbulent breakup.

**December 10<sup>th</sup>:**

The European Commission lays out contingency plans for a 'no-deal' Brexit at the end of 2020 to minimize disruption to air traffic and road and rail travel after talks between British and EU leaders have failed to break an impasse.

EU Council President Charles Michel announces that the Union's leaders have reached an agreement on the Recovery Fund and the Next Generation EU.

**December 11<sup>th</sup>:**

Charles Michel announces that European Union leaders have reached an agreement on the text about the fight against climate changes, planning to cut emissions of at least 55% within 2030.

**December 12<sup>th</sup>:**

British Ministry of Defense declares that four Royal Navy patrol ships are on standby to protect Britain's fishing waters in the event the Brexit transition period ends on December 31<sup>st</sup> without a deal on future ties with the European Union.

**December 13<sup>th</sup>:**

Boris Johnson and Ursula von der Leyen give negotiators a deadline to find a way to resolve an impasse on arrangements that would guarantee Britain zero-tariff and zero-quota access to the EU's single market.

**December 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Michel Barnier declares that there will be an end to negotiations with Great Britain when will be reached a deal for an equal and free competition and for a mutual access to waters and markets.

**December 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>:**

Ursula von der Leyen declares that Britain and the European Union have moved closer to sealing a new trade deal but it is still unclear if they would succeed.

**December 17<sup>th</sup>:**

The crew of two Italian fishing vessels coming from Mazara del Vallo, detained since the beginning of September 2020 in Benghazi, stronghold of General Khalifa el-Haftar, are released. Italian premier Giuseppe Conte and Foreign Affairs Minister Luigi Di Maio expressly go to Bengasi to bring back the released compatriots.

**December 18<sup>th</sup>:**

The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen announces a new power-sharing cabinet that would include Southern separatists in the internationally-recognized government, part of a deal to end a power struggle between the nominal allies.

**December 19<sup>th</sup>:**

China's military tails a US warship as it passes through the sensitive Taiwan Strait, denouncing such missions as sending «flirtatious glances» to supporters of Taiwan independence.

**December 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>:**

Britain's Health Minister Matt Hancock declares that London and Southeast England may stay under tighter coronavirus curbs for some time, adding that a fast-spreading new strain has forced the government to drop plans to ease restrictions for Christmas. The variant of the coronavirus is up to 70% more transmissible than the original.

**December 22<sup>nd</sup>:**

The United States slap fresh sanctions on Syria, targeting its central bank and blacklisting several people and entities in a continued effort to cut off funds for President Bashar al-Assad's government.

**December 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

Britain and the European Union appear close to clinching a long-elusive trade agreement, raising hopes that the estranged allies are set to avoid a turbulent economic rupture on New Year's Day.

**December 24<sup>th</sup>:**

Britain clinches a narrow Brexit trade deal with the European Union. It will preserve Britain's zero-tariff and zero-quota access to the bloc's single market, but will not prevent economic losses disruption for the United Kingdom or for EU member States.

**December 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>:**

From Gaza two air rockets are launched to the South of Israel and both are intercepted by Israeli antimissile system Iron Dome.

**December 27<sup>th</sup>:**

Europe launches a mass COVID-19 vaccination drive with pensioners and medics lining up to get the first shots to see off a pandemic that has crippled economies and claimed more than 1.7 million lives worldwide.

**December 28<sup>th</sup>:**

A Chinese court hands down a four-year jail term to the citizen-journalist Zhang Zhan who has reported from the central city of Wuhan at the peak of the 2020 year's coronavirus outbreak.

**December 29<sup>th</sup>:**

The European Union and United States criticize the jailing in China of Zhang Zhan who has reported on the early outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic from Wuhan.

**December 30<sup>th</sup>:**

In Aden at least 22 people are killed and dozens wounded in an attack at the airport, moments after a plane has landed carrying a newly formed Saudi-backed cabinet for government-held parts of Yemen.

**December 31<sup>st</sup>:**

In Yemen's Houthi-held capital Sanaa Saudi-led coalition warplanes strike targets in retaliation for attacks in the Southern port city of Aden the previous day that have taken place as officials in a government backed by Riyadh have arrived there.