

Quarterly Review of International Relations

October-December 2017

CHIARA D'AURIA

October 1st:

Spanish riot police burst into polling stations across Catalonia, confiscating ballot boxes and voting papers to try to halt a banned *referendum* on a split from Spain as Madrid has asserted its authority over the rebel region.

October 2nd:

The leader of Catalonia Carles Puigdemont calls for international mediation to resolve a standoff with Madrid, after a *referendum* on independence that has been ruled illegal and in which at least half of Catalans voted for the secession from Spain.

October 3rd:

Ahmed Hanachi, the Tunisian author of the double homicide in Marseille on October 1st, claimed by ISIS and which has cost the lives of two pedestrians, deadly injured, according to Italian policy has lived for two years near Rome.

October 4th:

Catalonia will move on October 10th to declare independence from Spain following October 1st, banned *referendum*, while during a speech to the nation the king of Spain Philip VI accuses the Catalan government of «unacceptable disloyalty» and of «irresponsibility».

October 5th:

In Paris, during a bilateral meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, French President Emmanuel Macron offers France as mediator between Iraqi government and the Kurdish in the complex situation after controversial *referendum* on Iraqi Kurdistan's independence held on September 25th with a favorable outcome for the divorce of the region from Baghdad, outcome which was not approved by the Iraqi government.

October 6th:

US President Donald Trump declares that Iran did not respect the spirit of nuclear agreement and aims to bring out the USA, while European Union sustains that the treaty is giving the expected outcomes.

October 7th:

Syrian governmental forces, backed by Russia and Iran, continue their offensive against ISIS in East Syria, while Turkish military ones are going to enter in the North-West Syrian region of Idlib, as announced in the agreements between Ankara and Moscow about the respective 'de-escalation' zones in Syria.

October 8th:

Iran warns the United States against designating its Revolutionary Guards Corp as a terrorist group and declares US regional military bases will be at risk if further sanctions are passed, after the White House has defined in October 6th that President Donald Trump will announce new US responses to Iran's missile tests, support for terrorism and cyber operations as part of his new Iran strategy.

October 9th:

At the beginning of the fifth negotiable round on Brexit the spokesman of EU Commission Magaritis Shinas declares that «for Brexit there is a clear sequence to follow» and that at the moment «no solution has been found» to conclude the first step for UK divorce from European Union.

October 10th:

Catalonia's leader Carles Puigdemont steps back from a formal declaration of independence from

Spain, stating he will delay doing so to allow time for talks with Madrid on the region's future.

October 11th:

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy gives the Catalan government eight days to drop an independence bid, failing which he will suspend the Catalonia's political autonomy and rule the region directly.

October 12th:

USA and Israel leave UNESCO because of the presence since 2011 of the Palestinian Authority, which pointed out the «needs of fundamental reforms of the organization and the prosecution of anti Israeli prejudice in UNESCO».

October 13th:

US President Donald Trump strikes a blow against the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement in defiance of other world powers, choosing not to certify that Tehran is complying with the deal in a major reversal of US policy.

October 14th-15th:

Syrian forces, supported by the USA and its international coalition, declare that the final battle to rip by ISIS Raqqa, considered the capital of the Islamic State in Syria, is taking place.

October 16th:

At EU Foreign Affairs' Ministers meeting in Luxemburg, the European Union reaffirms its support for a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers despite sharp criticism of the accord by President Donald Trump.

October 17th:

US-backed militias in Syria declare victory over Islamic State in its capital Raqqa.

October 18th:

Opening the XIX Communist Party congress, Chinese President Xi Jinping stresses to build a «modern socialist country for a new era, that will be proudly Chinese and steadfastly ruled by the party but open to the world».

October 19th-20th:

Spain's central government declares it will suspend Catalonia's autonomy and impose direct rule after the region's leader threatened to go ahead with a formal declaration of independence if Madrid refused to hold talks.

October 21st:

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy announces he will invoke special constitutional powers to fire the regional government and force a new election to counter the Catalan independence's movement of Carles Puigdemont.

October 22nd:

The Spanish government urges Catalans to accept direct control from Madrid and ignore instructions from the restive region's secessionist leadership once it has been removed from power.

October 23rd-24th:

According to American *media*, then confirmed by Pentagon sources, US airforce is alerted for its B-52 aircraft bombers with nuclear warheads to be ready to intervene, if necessary, in 24 hours because of growing tension with North Korea.

October 25th:

Kurdish authorities in Iraq offer to put an independence drive on hold, stepping up efforts to resolve a crisis in relations with Baghdad via dialogue.

October 26th:

Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont rules out holding a snap regional election to avoid direct rule imposed by Madrid, saying that it will be up to the Catalan parliament to move forward with a mandate to split from Spain following the independence *referendum* held on October 1st.

October 27th:

The Spanish government moves to impose direct rule over Catalonia after its Parliament declared

independence. European countries, the United States and Mexico reject the Catalan declaration and express support for Spain's unity.

October 28th:

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy removes Puigdemont from Catalonia's presidency, takes over the administration of the autonomous region and calls new regional elections to be held on December 21st 2017.

October 29th:

In a speech broadcast on State television President Hassan Rouhani declares Iran will continue to produce missiles for its defense and does not consider that a violation of international accords.

October 30th:

While Spain's direct rule over Catalonia takes hold, ousted Catalan President Carles Puigdemont travels to Belgium with several other members of his sacked administration, asking for political asylum. Spain's State prosecutor, Attorney-General Jose Manuel Maza, calls for charges of rebellion and sedition, as well as fraud and misuse of funds, to be brought against Catalan leaders.

October 31st:

In New York a pick-up pounces on one of the most crowded bicycle lanes in Manhattan causing a slaughter: at least 8 dead people and 15 injured. The bomber, a 29-years-old named Sayfullo Habibullaevic Saipov, of Uzbek origins, which also screamed «*Allah Akhbar*» during the attack, is arrested by police.

November 1st:

US investigators declare the Uzbek immigrant Sayfullo Habibullaevic Saipov, suspected of killing eight people in New York City on October 31st, followed plans laid out by the militant Islamic State group and planned the attack weeks in advance.

November 2nd:

Spanish judge Carmen Lamela orders nine Catalan secessionist leaders be held pending a potential trial over the region's independence push, issuing a European arrest warrant for ousted Catalan President Carles Puigdemont.

November 3rd:

ISIS claims the terroristic attack of October 31st: it is reported by international press, which cites the online journal «Al Naba» of the jihadist group.

November 4th:

Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont calls for unity of all political parties favorable to independence in view of regional elections of December 21st.

November 5th:

Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont and 4 Ministers with a European arrest warrant made by Spanish justice go to a police office in Bruxelles.

November 6th-7th:

During his official visit in Japan, in a conference press with Japanese premier Shinzo Abe US President Donald Trump declares that: «the era of strategic patience with North Korea is over». But he also says that the USA don't want to use their military force and invites Pyongyang to come back to negotiation rounds to look for an agreement.

November 8th:

Chinese President Xi welcomes a US President for the first time in China's history at the Forbidden City, in Donald Trump's official visit to People's Republic of China.

November 9th:

US President Donald Trump presses China to do more to rein in North Korea, declares bilateral trade has been unfair to the United States, and asks President Xi Jinping's that China will be more open to foreign firms.

November 10th:

British premier Theresa May establishes with a bill that Great Britain will leave the European Union

on March 29th 2019 at 11 p. m., affirming that she «will not tolerate any attempt to block the exit from the Union».

November 11th:

During the APEC summit in Vietnam, US President Donald Trump and Russian one Vladimir Putin agree on the prosecution of combined efforts against ISIS until its definitive defeat.

November 12th:

In an interview Spanish premier Mariano Rajoy states that Catalanian elections to be held in December will help to stop «independence destruction» and «restore normality».

November 13th:

European Union Foreign Affairs' Ministers approve economic sanctions, including an arms embargo, on Venezuela, saying regional elections on October 15th 2017 which confirmed the power of Chavist party of President Nicolas Maduro, but marred by reported irregularities, have deepened the country's crisis.

November 14th:

At the British House of Commons starts the presentation of the amendments to the Withdrawal Bill, the framework law for Brexit. There have been presented at least 470.

November 15th-16th:

Zimbabwe's military seizes power declaring it is holding President Robert Mugabe and his family safe while targeting «criminals» in the *entourage* of the man who has ruled the nation since independence 37 years ago.

November 17th:

In Strasburg European Parliament votes to give free way to negotiations with Council and Commission to reform Dublin's regulation. According to Parliament's proposal, the State in which an asylum seeker first arrives would not automatically and uniquely be responsible to value his request. Otherwise asylum seekers would have to be distributed in all EU member States.

November 18th:

US State Department issues an alert for American citizens in Europe for high risk of terroristic attacks, in particular during Christmas holidays.

November 19th:

Robert Mugabe agrees to resign as Zimbabwe's President after the ruling ZANU-PF party deprived him of its leadership following 37 years in charge.

November 20th:

After talks on forming a three-way coalition failed overnight in Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel declares she prefers a new election to ruling with a minority.

November 21st:

Libyan Parliament in Tobruk approves new roadmap for the solution of the country's crisis realized by UN special envoy Ghassan Salamé.

November 22nd - 23rd:

Burma and Bangladesh sign an agreement to return hundreds of thousands of rohynghia escaped from violence of the army in the Burmese State of Rakhine.

November 24th:

Emmerson Mangagwa swears as new President of Zimbabwe in place of Robert Mugabe, who has resigned because of army's pressure.

November 25th - 26th:

Egyptian police officers declare that gunmen who attacked a mosque on November 24th in Egypt's North Sinai brandished an Islamic State flag as they opened fire through doorways and windows, killing more than 300 worshippers, including two dozen children.

November 27th:

In Syria Russia proposes a two-day ceasefire in the last major rebel stronghold near the capital

Damascus, where warplanes killed at least 41 people in two days of air strikes as Russian-backed government forces tried to capture the area.

November 28th:

North Korea fires an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that landed close to Japan, Pyongyang's first test launch since sending a missile over its neighbor in mid-September 2017.

November 29th:

The United States warns North Korea's leadership it will be «utterly destroyed» if war is going to break out after Pyongyang test fired, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

November 30th:

During the EU-AU summit in the Ivory Coast, at the meeting between UN secretary general Antonio Guterres, the President of African Union Moussa Faki Mahamat, the President of European Union Jean-Claude Juncker and High Representative Federica Mogherini it is established the constitution of a EU-AU- UN task force to protect migrants along immigration routes and in particular Libyan ones.

December 1st-2nd:

Israeli missiles strike an Iranian military position in construction near Damascus and Syria's air defense. system responds against Israeli jets.

December 3rd:

US ambassador at UN Nikki Haley declares that USA announced to the Secretary General of United Nations Organization to cease their participation at the Global Compact in immigration signed in September 2016.

December 4th:

The United States and South Korea go ahead with large-scale joint aerial drills, a move North Korea has said will push the Korean peninsula to «the brink of nuclear war», ignoring calls from Russia and China to call them off.

December 5th:

US President Donald Trump tells Arab leaders that he intends to move the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, a move that would break with decades of US policy and risks fueling further unrest in the Middle East.

December 6th-7th:

President Donald Trump abruptly reverses decades of US policy and recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, generating outrage from Palestinians and defying warnings of unrest in the Middle East with the launch of Hamas' missiles against Israel.

December 8th:

After a meeting with British Prime Minister Theresa May in Brussels, the President of European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker announces it is reached an agreement on Brexit. It guarantees the rights of 3 million of EU citizens living in the UK, to whom will be applied the British law in British courts, and establishes there will not be any border between the Republic of Ireland and British Ulster.

December 9th:

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declares final victory over Islamic State after Iraqi forces have driven its last remnants from the country, three years after the militant group captured about a third of Iraq's territory.

December 10th:

In public remarks, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, a frequent critic of Israel, calls it an «invader State» and a «terror State». Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who has spoken at a news conference in Paris alongside French President Emmanuel Macron after the two leaders met, fires back he is not used to receiving lectures about morality from an illiberal leader as Erdogan is. But Macron tells Netanyahu that he needs to make gestures to the Palestinians to break the *impasse* between the two sides.

December 11th:

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu takes his case to European Union to ask allies to join the United

States in recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, but meets a firm rebuff from EU Foreign Ministers who see the move as a blow against the peace process in the Middle East.

December 12th:

In Manhattan the explosion of a bomb in Port Authority, the New York central bus station, causes 4 wounded, one of them is the bomber, none of them life threatening. Police arrests a 27-years-old man, Bangladesh's native, named Akayed Ullah, who has been trained by ISIS.

December 13th:

At the informal summit on climate change in Ile Séguin of Boulogne-Billancourt, close to Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron arrives with a slogan in response to US President Donald Trump: «Make Our Planet Great Again».

December 14th - 15th :

At the end of a *summit* in Bruxelles with the Visegrad countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) and with the President of European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker Italian premier Paolo Gentiloni declares that for Italy: «walls and closures are mistakes and compulsory quotas on immigration are the *minimum* standard for European Union».

December 16th:

European Council states that progress made during the first step of negotiation for Brexit is enough to pass to the following one which will be on transition and on the future framework. It is written on the leaders' declaration in which it is specified that the transition will last two years, with full power of EU laws, including full power of the Court of Justice.

December 17th:

Russian President Vladimir Putin thanks in a phone call US President Donald Trump for some information obtained by CIA which foiled a ISIS' plan to attack St. Petersburg and its cathedral.

December 18th:

The mayor of Misurata is killed while he was coming back from Istanbul with a delegation of local officials. Police authorities investigate for terroristic homicide by Islamist forces.

December 19th:

Pro-Iranian Yemeni rebels named Houti announce the launch of a ballistic missile on Saudi royal palace in Ryad, which is intercepted in the South of the Saudi capital.

December 20th:

The vice President of European Commission Frans Timmermans announces that, for the first time in the history of the Union, started the procedure for sanctions according to art. 7 of the EU Treaties for the risk of serious violation of the constitutional state in Poland. The reform of justice proposed by Warsaw is targeted, while it limits the judiciary's power. The European Council will establish to go further with the *iter*.

December 21st:

At the political elections in Catalonia, the independence front wins but is not sure to obtain the absolute majority of the seats (68 on 135) in the new Parliament in Barcelona.

December 22nd:

Spanish premier Mariano Rajoy declares to be ready to start a new step of dialogue with the new government to be made in Catalonia after the elections of December 21st, always «within the law».

December 23rd:

The UN Security Council unanimously imposes new sanctions on North Korea for its recent intercontinental ballistic missile test, seeking to limit its access to refined petroleum products, crude oil and its earnings from workers abroad.

December 24th:

In an official note the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs declares that North Korea considers as an act of war the new sanctions imposed by UN Security Council.

December 25th:

China calls for all countries to make constructive efforts to ease tension after North Korea declares

the UN sanctions against it are an act of war and tantamount to a complete economic blockade.

December 26th:

South Korea predicts that North Korea will look to open negotiations with the United States in an optimistic outlook for 2018, even as Seoul set up a specialized military team to confront nuclear threats from the North.

December 27th:

The United States announces sanctions on two of North Korea's most prominent officials behind its ballistic missile program while Russia reiterates an offer to mediate to ease tension between Washington and Pyongyang.

December 28th:

In Kabul a kamikaze blows himself up in the Tanbian Media Center, where is located the office of the press agency Sadai Afghan. The toll is of 41 death and 41 injured people, and ISIS claims the attack.

December 29th:

Russian President Vladimir Putin defines «a terroristic attack» the explosion in the commercial centre Gigant Hall in St. Petersburg occurred on December 28th during which 13 people have been injured.

December 30th:

As Islamic State militant group claimed responsibility for the blast, Russia's FSB security service declares it has detained the individual suspected of organizing and carrying out a bombing that injured 13 people in a St. Petersburg supermarket in December 28th.

December 31st:

Anti-government protesters demonstrate in Iran in defiance of a warning by the authorities of a tough crackdown, extending for a fourth day one of the most audacious challenges to the clerical leadership since pro-reform unrest in 2009.