

Quarterly Review of International Relations

October-December 2019

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October 1st:

Hong Kong police shoots a teenage protester, the first to be hit by live ammunition in almost four months of unrest in the Chinese-ruled city, amid violent clashes on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

October 2nd:

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a final Brexit offer to the European Union, pitching a possible compromise for a last-minute exit deal that is cautiously welcomed by the EU though the two sides still remain far apart.

October 3rd:

North Korea declares it has successfully test-fired a new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) from the sea to contain external threats and bolster self-defense, ahead of fresh nuclear talks with the United States.

October 4th:

Hong Kong police shoots and wounds a teenage boy, as violent protests erupt across the Chinese-ruled city hours after its embattled leader Carrie Lam has invoked colonial-era emergency powers last used more than 50 years ago.

October 5th:

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declares much work remained to be done at US-North Korean nuclear talks that have began in Sweden aimed at ending a stalemate, expressing hope that «a set of dialogues» will follow in coming weeks and months.

October 6th:

North Korea declares there is no way the United States will bring alternative plans for their stalled nuclear talks to the meeting proposed by Stockholm in two weeks after negotiations in Sweden have braked down.

October 7th:

North Korea warns the United States, Britain, France and Germany that raising the issue of Pyongyang's missile tests at the United Nations Security Council «will further urge our desire to defend our sovereignty».

October 8th:

US President Donald Trump upends his own policy on Syria with a chaotic series of pronouncements, blindsiding foreign allies, catching senior Republican supporters off guard and sending aides scrambling to control the damage.

October 9th:

In the Eastern German city of Halle two people are killed in shooting attacks on a synagogue and a nearby *kebab* shop and one suspect is arrested, but two others have fled in a hijacked a car.

October 10th:

Turkey pounds Kurdish militia in Northeast Syria for a second day, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee and killing dozens, in a cross-border assault on US allies that turns the Washington establishment against Donald Trump.

October 11th:

According to Iranian media in the Red Sea off Saudi Arabia's coast an Iranian-owned oil tanker is struck, probably by missiles, an incident that if confirms will stoke tension in a region rattled by attacks on tankers and oil sites since May.

October 12th-13th:

Britain's Brexit talks with the European Union aimed at striking a last-minute divorce deal are getting serious, as Boris Johnson prepares to update his cabinet on the state of negotiations.

October 14th:

Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar says Syrian Kurdish YPG fighters have emptied a jail holding Islamic State prisoners in a part of Syria where Ankara is mounting an offensive, and that the prisoners there have been abducted.

October 15th:

Turkey presses ahead with its offensive in Northern Syria despite US sanctions and growing calls for it to stop, while Syria's Russia-backed army move on the key city of Manbij that has been abandoned by US forces.

October 16th:

British and EU officials are on the verge of a last-minute Brexit deal but Boris Johnson still has work to do at home to ensure Parliament approves the plan.

October 17th:

European Union leaders unanimously back a Brexit deal with Britain, leaving Boris Johnson facing a battle to secure the UK Parliament's backing for the agreement if he is to take Britain out of Europe on October 31st.

October 18th:

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan declares Turkey will set up a dozen observation posts across Northeast Syria, insisting that a «planned safe zone» will extend much further than US officials have said is covered under a fragile ceasefire deal.

October 19th:

Boris Johnson sends a letter requesting a further extension to Britain's departure from the European Union, obliged to ask for a delay after losing the vote in Parliament.

October 20th:

The British government insists the country will leave the European Union on October 31st despite the letter that Boris Johnson has been forced by Parliament to send to the bloc requesting a Brexit delay.

October 21st:

US Defense Secretary Mark Esper declares the Pentagon is considering keeping some US troops near oilfields in Northeastern Syria alongside Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to help deny oil to Islamic State militants.

October 22nd:

Boris Johnson warns Parliament that if it delays his Brexit legislation he will abandon his attempt to ratify the deal to leave the European Union and push for an election instead.

October 23rd:

Hong Kong's legislature formally withdraws planned legislation that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China, but the move is unlikely to end months of unrest as it has met just one of five demands of pro-democracy demonstrators.

October 24th:

Boris Johnson calls for a general election on December 12th to break Britain's Brexit impasse, conceding for the first time he will not meet his «do or die» deadline to leave the European Union on October 31st.

October 25th:

Lebanon's Hezbollah movement warns that a power vacuum can tip the country into civil war, suggesting that adversaries including the United States and Israel are seeking to exploit an unprecedented wave of demonstrations to provoke conflict.

October 26th:

Tayyip Erdogan declares that Turkey will clear Northeast Syria of Kurdish YPG militia if Russia does not fulfill its obligations under an accord that helps end a Turkish offensive in the region.

October 27th:

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) say they have agreed to withdraw more than 30 km (19 miles) from the Turkish border, an announcement welcomed by Damascus which states Turkey should end its «aggression» in Northeast Syria.

October 28th:

The European Union agrees to a potential three-month Brexit delay until January 31st 2020 that Boris Johnson vows never to request, as Johnson searches a snap election to secure a majority capable of passing his divorce deal.

October 29th:

Boris Johnson wins Parliament's preliminary approval to hold Britain's first December election in almost a century in a bid to break the Brexit deadlock.

October 30th:

Chile withdraws as the host of an APEC summit on November at which the United States and China have been expected to sign a deal to ease trade tensions hurting the global economy, as raging street protests grip the South American country.

October 31st:

Islamic State confirms that its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been killed in a weekend raid by US forces in Northwestern Syria and vows revenge against the United States.

November 1st:

Bolivia's opposition is hardening its stance in street protests against President Evo Morales, calling for the longtime leftist leader to step down and rejecting an international audit of the divisive election that has handed him a fourth term.

November 2nd-3rd:

Hong Kong anti-government protesters crowd an upmarket shopping mall in running clashes with police, with several suffering bloody wounds after parts of the Chinese-ruled city have become a battleground.

November 4th:

Attending at the 7th ASEAN-United States summit in Bangkok, US National Security Advisor Robert C. O'Brien denounces Chinese «intimidation» in the South China Sea and declares they should not be bullied into giving up their resources by what he compares to a conquest.

November 5th:

Hassan Rouhani declares Iran will start injecting uranium gas into centrifuges at its underground Fordow enrichment facility, a highly symbolic breach that will complicate European efforts to salvage Tehran's nuclear deal.

November 6th:

Lebanon's Saad al-Hariri, who has resigned as prime minister, has a positive meeting with leading politician Gebran Bassil and all ideas are discussed for getting the country out of economic crisis.

November 7th:

Tayyip Erdogan declares the United States are not fulfilling their pledge to remove a Kurdish militia from a Syrian border region and he will raise the issue when he meets Donald Trump.

November 8th:

Candlelight Hong Kong vigils mourning a student who dies after a high fall during a pro-democracy rally quickly spiraled into street fires and cat-and-mouse clashes between pro-democracy protesters and police.

November 9th:

Argentine President-elect Alberto Fernandez joins the inaugural meeting of the so-called Puebla Group in Buenos Aires, a conference of left-leaning regional political leaders.

November 10th:

Bolivian President Evo Morales agrees to hold new presidential elections after an audit of the disputed October vote has called for it to be annulled, while pressure mounts on the leftist leader to step down amid the resignations of some government officials.

November 11th:

Hassan Rouhani declares Iran will regain access to the international arms market in 2020 if it sticks to its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and this will prove «a huge political success».

November 12th:

Evo Morales lands in Mexico pledging to stay in politics as security forces back home quell unrest over the long-serving leftist's resignation and opponents seek an interim replacement to fill a power vacuum.

November 13th:

Senate vice-president and conservative Jeanine Anez assumes the interim role as president of Bolivia and pledges to hold a new election as soon as possible, condemning «revenge» acts by disgruntled supporters of Evo Morales.

November 14th:

Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters paralyze parts of the city for a fourth successive day, forcing schools to close and blocking highways, as students build campus barricades and the government dismisses rumors of a curfew.

November 15th:

Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters partially unblock a key highway and then block it again during the evening rush hour, exposing splits in a movement that has been largely leaderless in months of often violent unrest.

November 16th:

In Hong Kong police fires tear gas while protesters throw petrol bombs and fired arrows in clashes outside Polytechnic University, just hours after Chinese soldiers have made a rare appearance to help clean up the city's streets.

November 17th:

Donald Trump tells North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to «act quickly» to reach a deal with the United States, in a tweet weighing in on North Korea's criticism of his political rival former Vice President Joe Biden.

November 18th:

South Korean and US officials resume talks to narrow a \$4 billion gap in how much they want Seoul to pay for the cost of hosting the American military amid public protests of «highway robbery» against sharply increased US demands.

November 19th:

Anti-government protesters hole up in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University searched for escape routes after more than two days of clashes with police, dramatic breakouts by rope and motorcycle and more than 1,000 arrests in 24 hours.

November 20th:

US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun declares a year-end deadline North Korea sets for Washington to show more flexibility in nuclear talks is an artificial one, but can mean a return to «provocative» steps that have preceded the past two years of diplomacy.

November 21st:

Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn unveils his party's election manifesto, setting out radical plans to transform Great Britain with public sector pay rises, higher taxes on companies and a sweeping nationalization of infrastructure.

November 22nd:

Iraqi security forces kill four protesters in Baghdad, according to police sources, and forcibly disperse activists blocking the main port near Basra, as the country's top cleric has called for electoral reforms to end the unrest.

November 23rd:

Over Hong Kong an uneasy calm settles as the city prepares to stage local elections seen as a referendum on months of anti-government protests, after weeks of especially violent clashes between police and demonstrators.

November 24th:

Hong Kong residents turn out in huge numbers to vote in district council elections seen as a test of support for chief executive Carrie Lam following six months of pro-democracy protests, and polling takes place with no major disruptions.

November 25th:

In Hong Kong, the elections with record turnout hand a big victory to pro-democracy local district council candidates, posing a new conundrum for Beijing and adding pressure on the city's leader.

November 26th:

Tightening control over efforts to manage the upheaval in Hong Kong, the Chinese leadership set up a crisis command center on the mainland side of the border and is considering replacing its official liaison to the restive semi-autonomous city.

November 27th:

EU lawmakers confirm German CDU's Ursula von der Leyen as European Commission President along with her new team of 26 commissioners, with 461 voting in favor and 157 against.

November 28th:

The United States accuse Russia of helping Syria conceal the use of banned toxic munitions in the civil war by undermining the work of the global chemical weapons agency trying to identify those responsible.

November 29th:

British police shoots dead a man wearing a fake suicide vest who stabs several people near London Bridge in what authorities call a terrorist attack, before bystanders have wrestled him to the ground.

November 30th:

Dutch police declares they have arrested a 35-year-old man suspected of stabbing three youths on a street in the center of The Hague late on November 29th.

December 1st:

Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, engulfed in crisis over the probe into a murdered journalist, announces he plans to step down, saying he will ask his ruling Labor Party to start choosing a new leader for the country on January 2020.

December 2nd-3rd:

Donald Trump slates European allies ahead of the NATO anniversary summit in Watford, Great Britain, singling out France's President Emmanuel Macron for «very nasty» comments on the health of the alliance and Germany for spending too little on defense.

December 4th:

At the NATO summit in Watford, Britain, the leaders agree to appoint a group of experts to conduct a strategic review over two years to prepare the Western alliance for the future.

December 5th:

Police fires tear gas at protesters in the center of Paris and public transport ground to a near halt in one of the biggest strikes in France for decades, aimed at forcing Emmanuel Macron to ditch a planned reform of pensions.

December 6th:

European powers demand at talks that Iran stop violating their nuclear deal, but stop short of triggering a mechanism that could renew UN sanctions and kill the 2015 accord.

December 7th:

The United States and Iran each free a prisoner in a rare act of cooperation between two longtime foes whose ties have worsened since Donald Trump has taken office.

December 8th:

Donald Trump states that Kim Jong Un risks losing «everything» if he resumes hostility and his country must denuclearize, after North Korea has declared it has carried out a «successful test of great significance».

December 9th:

Russian President Vladimir Putin meets his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskiy for the first at a summit in Paris aimed at advancing efforts to restore peace to Eastern Ukraine.

December 10th:

In France strikes against pension reforms shoot schools and cause transport chaos , but the number of people taking to the streets drops by more than half, strengthening Emmanuel Macron's hand.

December 11th:

In the main US military base in Afghanistan suicide bombers strike, killing at least one person and injuring scores in a major attack that could scupper plans to revive peace talks between the United States and the Taliban.

December 12th:

In Great Britain voters went to the polls in an election that will pave the way for Brexit under Boris Johnson or propel the country towards another referendum that could ultimately reverse the decision to leave the European Union.

December 13th:

Boris Johnson calls for unity to heal the Brexit divisions that have rived the United Kingdom, hours after winning a commanding victory from voters who has backed his bid to deliver on the EU divorce by the end of January 2020.

December 14th-15th:

North Korea declares it has successfully conducted another test at a satellite launch site, the latest in a string of developments aimed at «restraining and overpowering the nuclear threat of the US».

December 16th:

Xi Jinping offers his support for Carrie Lam, praising her courage in governing the Chinese-ruled financial hub in these «most difficult» times after months of often violent anti-government protests.

December 17th:

Britain sets a hard deadline of December 2020 to reach a new trade deal with the European Union, betting that the prospect of another Brexit cliff-edge will force Brussels to move more quickly than usual to seal an accord.

December 18th:

Bolivian prosecutors issue an arrest warrant against former president Evo Morales for alleged sedition and terrorism related to accusations from the interim government that he has been stirring unrest since resigning.

December 19th:

Boris Johnson unveils what he calls a radical government agenda, setting his sights on a quick Brexit, future trade deals and on transforming Britain to repay the trust of voters who have handed him a landslide election victory.

December 20th:

Boris Johnson wins approval for his Brexit deal in Parliament, the first step towards fulfilling his election pledge to deliver Britain's departure from the European Union by January 31st 2020 after his landslide victory.

December 21st:

Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara declares the West African Economic and Monetary Union reaches an agreement with France to make changes to the CFA franc, in a historic shift away from the former colonial power.

December 22nd:

Hong Kong riot police pepper sprays protesters to disperse crowds in the heart of the city's financial district after a largely peaceful rally in support of China's ethnic Uighurs has turned chaotic.

December 23rd-24th:

South Korean and US special forces troops recently conduct drills simulating the infiltration of an enemy facility, as tensions with North Korea has reached up ahead of the year-end deadline.

December 25th:

Hong Kong anti-government protesters march through Christmas-decorated shopping centers, chanting pro-democracy slogans and forcing one mall to close early, as police fires tear gas to disperse crowds gathering on nearby streets.

December 26th:

Hundreds of protesters march through Hong Kong shopping malls, disrupting business in the Asian financial hub for a third day over the festive period and prompting riot police to close off a mall in a tourist district.

December 27th-28th:

Hong Kong police arrests about a dozen protesters and uses pepper spray to break up a protest in a shopping mall aimed at disrupting retail businesses near the border with mainland China.

December 29th:

The US military carries out air strikes in Iraq and Syria against the Kataib Hezbollah militia group in response to the killing of a US civilian contractor in a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base.

December 30th:

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi condemns US air strikes on bases of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia, a move that can plunge Iraq further into the heart of a proxy conflict between the United States and Iran.

December 31st:

Protesters enraged by US air strikes on Iraq stage a violent demonstration outside the US Embassy in Baghdad, setting fires ablaze and hurling stones as security forces and guards fire tear gas and stun grenades to repel them.