

Quarterly Review of International Relations

January-March 2019

CHIARA D'AURIA

January 1st:

In Manchester a man armed with a knife injures three people, including a police officer, at the city's Victoria train station on New Year's Eve in an attack police are treating as terrorism-related.

January 2nd:

Chinese President Xi Jinping urges Taiwanese citizens to agree that Taiwan «must and will be» reunited to PRC: Xi confirms Beijing's will to proceed to the peaceful reunification on the basis of the concept 'one country, two systems' but warns that China reserves the right to use force.

January 3rd:

A North Korean diplomat who has been until recently acting ambassador to Italy has gone missing, while according to South Korean newspaper report he is seeking asylum in the West.

January 4th-5th-6th:

US National Security Advisor John Bolton warns the Syrian government it should not see the impending US military withdrawal from the country as an invitation to use chemical weapons. He also declares Turkey must agree to protect the United States' Kurdish allies.

January 7th:

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is on a mission for the fourth time in China (January 7th-10th 2019), invited by Xi Jinping, while it is discussed a second summit with US President Donald Trump despite the negotiation deadlock on denuclearization.

January 8th:

The Afghan Taliban declare they have called off peace talks with US officials in Qatar due to an «agenda disagreement», especially over the involvement of Afghan officials as well as a possible ceasefire and prisoner exchange.

January 9th-10th:

Donald Trump flies to McAllen, Texas, at the border with Mexico, threatens to declare the national emergency and cancels his travel to the Davos World Economic Forum (January 23th-26th) to continue to dramatize the migration 'crisis' in his mediatic offensive. Moves that arrive after his intervention from the Oval Office on live TV on all networks and after the umpteenth clash with Democrats, who keep refusing him the funds to build a wall considered «expensive, useless and immoral».

January 11th:

The US-led coalition battling Islamic State adds to confusion surrounding the US withdrawal from Syria by declaring that it has started the pullout process but US officials later clarify that only equipment, not troops, have exited the country.

January 12th:

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declares he is optimistic that a «good outcome» can be reached between Turkey and Syrian Kurdish groups, after speaking to the Turkey Minister of Foreign Affairs.

January 13th:

British Prime Minister Theresa May warns lawmakers that failing to deliver Brexit will be catastrophic for democracy, in a plea for support two days before Parliament is expected to reject her deal with Brussels.

January 14th:

Theresa May urges lawmakers to take a «second look» at her deal to leave the European Union, a last-ditch effort to win over the Parliament that looks set to reject the agreement.

January 15th:

The British Parliament with 230 votes, a very heavy deviation for the Tory government, rejects the Theresa May deal to leave Britain's exit from the European Union in disarray 10 weeks before it is due to leave. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn presents a no-confidence motion against the government.

January 16th:

Theresa May wins the confidence vote in the British Parliament before proposing immediate talks with other party leaders in an attempt to break the deadlock on a Brexit divorce agreement.

January 17th:

Britain's last-minute scramble to shape its exit from the EU, its biggest policy upheaval in half a century, hit the rocks as Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn dig in their heels for competing visions.

January 18th:

The first meeting between Theresa May and the leaders of the opposition for a common line on Brexit takes place, after the rejection of May's deal at the House of Commons. To the summit LibDem, Snp and Plaid Cymru take part but is missing the leader of the most important opposition party, the Labor Jeremy Corbyn. As a precondition to talk with him, Corbyn asks the commitment of the premier to exclude every hypothesis of no deal divorce from the EU.

January 19th:

Talking in live streaming to the nation from the White House, Donald Trump illustrates his proposition to Democrats, in exchange for funds for the wall with Mexico: a temporal extension of three years for the protection of the 700.000 'dreamers', immigrants arrived in the country when they were children with irregular migrants parents – and for 300.000 migrants with the status of temporary protection.

January 20th:

British Trade Minister Liam Fox declares that Parliament cannot be allowed to hijack Brexit, in a warning to lawmakers who want to take more control over Britain's departure from the European Union.

January 21st:

Israeli army formalizes its attack against Iranian military targets in Syria and warns the Syrian authorities not to take revenge against Israel. This declaration arrives after the diurnal airstrike made close to the international airport of Damascus. Until now Israel had never admitted military operations in Syria.

January 22nd:

Jeremy Corbyn moves a step closer to paving the way for another referendum on European Union membership by trying to use Parliament to grab control of Brexit from Theresa May.

January 23rd:

Backed by hundreds of thousands of protesters and the support of the United States, Venezuela opposition leader Juan Guaido declares himself *interim* President of the Country, calling for free elections to end the rule of socialist Nicolas Maduro.

January 24th:

No motion for a second referendum for Brexit at the British House of Commons: the lawmakers that have announced the initiative – all backing the People's Vote campaign – withdraw it, admitting that they miss the necessary support. The announcement is given by Labor MPs and some dissident and 'pro-remain' Tories

January 25th:

The United States intensify their push to drive Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro from power, as US diplomats leave the embassy in Caracas and Russia vows to back its socialist South American ally.

January 26th:

Major European countries throw their weight behind Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaido saying they will recognize him as *interim* President if Nicolas Maduro fails to call elections within February 3rd 2019.

January 27th:

Nicolas Maduro rejects the international ultimatum to call new elections within eight days and says that Juan Guaido has violated the country's constitution by declaring himself leader.

January 28th:

United States are committed to withdrawing foreign forces from Afghanistan to end more than 17 years of war, speaking after six days of American peace talks with Afghan Taliban militants.

January 29th:

Venezuela's government moves against Juan Guaido, seeking a travel ban and a freeze on his bank accounts, while State-run oil company PDVSA sees to sidestep US sanctions.

January 30th:

Ireland accuses Theresa May of wishful thinking for seeking to renegotiate a post-Brexit arrangement for the Irish border in an attempt to get backing for Britain's EU divorce deal in Parliament.

February 1st:

France, Germany and Great Britain open a new channel for non-dollar trade with Iran to avert US sanctions, although diplomats say it is unlikely to allow for the big transactions that Tehran says it needs to keep a nuclear deal afloat.

February 2nd:

A high-ranking Venezuelan general calls on the armed forces to rebel against Nicolas Maduro and to recognize Juan Guaido as the *interim* chief as huge crowds rally against the head of State, adding pressure on Maduro to step down.

February 3rd:

Donald Trump declares that sending the military to Venezuela is «an option» as Western nations boost pressure on Nicolas Maduro to hand over power to Juan Guaido.

February 4th:

Major European nations join the United States in recognizing Juan Guaido as Venezuela's legitimate head of State, while a separate regional bloc meeting keeps up the pressure on Nicolas Maduro.

February 5th:

Theresa May announces she will travel to Brussels on February 7th 2019 to tell European Union leaders they must accept legally binding changes to the Irish border arrangements of Britain's divorce deal or face the prospect of a disorderly no-deal Brexit.

February 6th:

In his joint declaration with the Irish premier Leo Varadkar EU Council President Donald Tusk states that: «The 27 EU member States will not present any other new offer to negotiate Brexit. The deal is not open for a new negotiation. I hope that on February 7th 2019 from May we will listen to a realistic proposal on how put an end to the *impasse*».

February 7th:

EU officials are still urging Theresa May to grasp an offer from the Labor opposition to break an impasse over the terms of Britain's EU exit.

February 8th:

Donald Trump declares that US diplomats had a «very productive meeting» with North Korean officials, and he announces that his summit at the end of February 2019 with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will be held in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi.

February 9th-10th:

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) seize ground from Islamic State in a fierce battle to capture its last *enclave* in Eastern Syria.

February 11th-12th:

Nicolas Maduro seeks OPEC support against US sanctions imposed on his country's oil industry, citing their impact on oil prices and potential risks for other members of the producer group.

February 13th:

In Iran a suicide bomber kills at least 27 members of Iran's *élite* Revolutionary Guards, in a Southeastern region where security forces are facing a rise in attacks by militants from the country's Sunni Muslim minority.

February 14th:

British lawmakers defeat Theresa May in a symbolic vote over her Brexit strategy, undermining her pledge to European Union leaders that she can get the unpopular divorce deal approved if they grant her concessions.

February 15th:

United States and Iceland agree to set up formal economic channels to boost trade and business investment.

February 16th:

Iran warns neighboring Pakistan it will «pay a heavy price» for allegedly harboring militants who have killed 27 of its *élite* Revolutionary Guards in a suicide bombing near the border.

February 17th:

United States declare they will have to sever their military assistance to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) battling Islamic State if the fighters partner with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or Russia.

February 18th:

Donald Trump warns members of Venezuela's military who are helping Nicolas Maduro to stay in power that they are risking their future and their lives and urges them to allow humanitarian aid into the country.

February 19th-20th:

Theresa May arrives in Brussels for «detailed discussions» as she seeks to wring more concessions on Brexit from a skeptical European Union, her strategy further batters by the defection of three lawmakers.

February 21st:

United States and North Korea will seek a common understanding of what denuclearization means when Donald Trump presses Kim Jong-un to give up all of the North's nuclear weapons.

February 22nd:

Venezuelan troops kill at least one person and wound several others near the Brazilian border, the first bloodshed linked to opposition efforts to bring aid into the South American country against the wishes of embattled Nicolas Maduro.

February 23rd-24th:

Theresa May promises to offer lawmakers a vote on her Brexit deal by March 12th 2019 in the latest delay to her attempt to win approval for a plan to ensure Britain's orderly departure from the European Union.

February 25th:

Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un will hold a second summit with no real expectation of a final deal on ridding the North of nuclear weapons, but raise hopes for an official peace on the peninsula at long last.

February 26th:

Theresa May offers lawmakers the chance to vote on March 12th 2019 for a potentially disorderly no-deal Brexit or to delay Britain's exit from the European Union if her attempt to ratify a divorce agreement fails.

February 27th:

Brexit Minister Stephen Barclay declares that Great Britain will write to the European Union to try to secure guarantees on citizens' rights in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

February 28th:

The second summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un collapses over sanctions on Pyongyang, and the two sides give conflicting accounts of what leads to the failure, raising questions about the future of denuclearization talks.

March 1st:

United States announce sanctions on Venezuelan officials who blocked a humanitarian aid convoy to the country, as Juan Guaido tours South America to drum up support for an end to Nicolas Maduro's government.

March 2nd-3rd:

Donald Trump declares that North Korea does not have any economic future with nuclear weapons as the Pentagon confirms the United States and South Korea have agreed to end joint large scale spring military exercises.

March 4th:

Juan Guaido returns to his country after flouting a court-imposed travel ban by touring Latin American countries to boost support for his campaign to tighten regional pressure on Nicolas Maduro.

March 5th:

Talks with Britain on amending its divorce deal with the European Union make no progress and no solution is in sight, days before British lawmakers must vote on the plan to avoid a chaotic Brexit.

March 6th:

Venezuela's government expels the German Ambassador, while press advocacy groups say two journalists, one of them American, are detained.

March 7th:

Donald Trump's special representative for Venezuela pledges that Washington will «expand the net» of sanctions on the South American nation, including more measures on banks supporting Nicolas Maduro's government.

March 8th:

Theresa May urges the European Union to make «just one more push» to break the Brexit deadlock but proposals from the bloc's chief negotiator fall short of anything that would win over the British Parliament.

March 9th-10th:

British Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt declares Brexit could be reversed if lawmakers reject the government's exit deal, after two major Eurosceptic factions in Parliament warn that Theresa May is facing a heavy defeat.

March 11th:

Theresa May clinches legally binding Brexit assurances with the European Union in a last ditch attempt to win over rebellious British lawmakers who have threatened to vote down her divorce deal again.

March 12th:

Theresa May battles to win support for her plans for an orderly Brexit, urging skeptical Conservative Party members to vote for her deal or risk not leaving the European Union at all.

March 13th:

British lawmakers reject leaving the European Union without a deal in any scenario, paving the way for a vote to delay Brexit to seek a way out of the country's worst political crisis.

March 14th-15th:

The Northern Irish party, that is crucial to Theresa May's hopes of getting her twice-defeated Brexit deal through Parliament, declares it has good talks with British Ministers but differences remain over the Irish border.

March 16th:

Juan Guaido declares he is launching a «new phase» in his push to oust Nicolas Maduro, pledging to travel across the country before 'reclaiming' the presidential palace.

March 17th:

Falling bombs raise smoke over Islamic State's last *enclave* in East Syria, obscuring the huddle of vehicles and makeshift shelters to which the group's self-declared 'caliphate' has been reduced.

March 18th:

Theresa May's Brexit plans are thrown into further turmoil when the speaker of Parliament rules that she cannot put her divorce deal to a new vote unless it is re-submitted in a fundamentally different form.

March 19th-20th:

Theresa May will request a short delay to Brexit after her failure to get a deal ratified by Parliament has left the United Kingdom's divorce from the European Union in turmoil.

March 21st:

Brazil's former President Michel Temer is arrested in an investigation of alleged graft in the construction of a nuclear power plant, threatening to delay debate over the government's ambitious fiscal reforms.

March 22nd:

Donald Trump declares he is ordering the withdrawal of recently announced North Korea-related sanctions imposed by the US Treasury Department.

March 23rd:

US-backed forces proclaim the capture of Islamic State's last territory in Syria, eliminating its rule over a self-proclaimed 'caliphate', but the jihadists remain a threat from sleeper cells around the world.

March 24th:

Theresa May is holding crisis talks with colleagues in an effort to breathe life into her twice-defeated Brexit deal after reports that her cabinet is plotting to topple her.

March 25th:

Israel launches air strikes in the Gaza Strip and deploys extra troops to the border, promising a strong response to the longest-range Palestinian rocket attack to cause casualties.

March 26th:

Cross-border fighting between Israel and Hamas abates after a day of Palestinian rocket attacks and Israeli air strikes, but Israel declares it reserves the right to strike again and keeps its troops and tanks massed at the Gaza border.

March 27th:

Theresa May declares she will quit if her European Union divorce deal passes at the third attempt, making a last-ditch sacrifice to try to win over dozens of rebels within her Conservative party.

March 28th:

British Parliament will discuss a motion relating to Brexit on March 29th but it is not yet clear whether this would result in a formal third vote on the government's Brexit deal.

March 29th:

Lawmakers reject Theresa May's Brexit deal for a third time, sounding its probable death knell and leaving Great Britain's withdrawal from the European Union in turmoil on the very day it was supposed to leave the bloc.

March 30th:

Theresa May is facing a new push by members of her Conservative Party to lead Great Britain out of the European Union in the next few months, even if it means a potentially damaging no-deal Brexit

March 31st:

Millions of Ukrainians cast their votes in a presidential election in which Volodymyr Zelensky, a comedian with a popular anti-corruption message but no political experience is tipped to win the first round.