

Quarterly Review of International Relations

April-June 2019

CHIARA D'AURIA

April 1st:

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's ruling AK Party is on track to lose control of Turkey's two biggest cities, Istanbul and Ankara, in a stunning local election setback that can complicate the President's plans to combat recession.

April 2nd:

British Prime Minister Theresa May declares she will ask the European Union for a further delay to Brexit beyond April 12th to give her time to sit down with the opposition Labor Party in a bid to break the impasse over Britain's departure.

April 3rd:

After the meeting between Theresa May and leader opposition Labor Party Jeremy Corbyn, the two parts declare to have shown flexibility and commitment to put an end to the actual uncertain phase of Brexit.

April 4th:

Twenty-five lawmakers in Britain's opposition Labor Party urge their leader Jeremy Corbyn to go the «extra step» if there is a chance of agreeing a Brexit deal in talks with Theresa May.

April 5th:

Great Britain's opposition Labor Party declares that talks with the government on a last-ditch Brexit deal have made no progress, as EU leaders say Theresa May has not convinced them that they should let Britain delay its departure.

April 6th:

After weeks of power cuts and limited access to water, tens of thousands of Venezuelans take to the streets to back opposition leader Juan Guaido and protest against President Nicolas Maduro, whom they accuse of wrecking the economy.

April 7th:

Eastern Libyan forces carry out air strikes on the Southern part of Tripoli and make progress toward the city center, escalating an operation to take the capital as the United Nations have failed to achieve a truce.

April 8th:

Brexit hangs in the balance as Theresa May tries to coax the Labor Party into agreeing a divorce deal with a better chance of passage by Parliament, ahead of a crisis EU summit where she will try to delay the April 12th departure.

April 9th:

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is on course to securing a record fifth term with another right-wing coalition, according to exit polls, as both he and his principal rival claim victory.

April 10th:

European Union leaders give Britain six more months to leave the bloc, more than Theresa May says she needs but less than many in the bloc want, thanks to fierce resistance from France.

April 11th:

US President Donald Trump declares he will leave sanctions in place on North Korea as he and South Korean President Moon Jae-in discuss ways to get US-North Korea nuclear talks back on track after the failed summit in Hanoi.

April 12th:

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accuses China of aiding Venezuela's economic collapse by bankrolling Nicolas Maduro's government and declares Russian troop presence in the country is an «obvious provocation».

April 13th:

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas swears in a new government headed by a loyalist from his dominant Fatah party, a move rejected by his Islamist rival Hamas.

April 14th:

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi meets in Cairo with Khalifa Haftar, the commander of Eastern-based Libyan forces, who is under international pressure to halt an advance on the capital Tripoli.

April 15th:

Mike Pompeo declares that the United States will use all economic and political tools at their disposal to hold Nicolas Maduro accountable for his country's crisis and will make clear to Cuba and Russia they will pay a price for supporting him.

April 16th:

The Trump administration imposes new sanctions and other punitive measures on Cuba and Venezuela, seeking to ratchet up US pressure on L'Havana to end its support for Nicolas Maduro.

April 17th:

North Korea declares it no longer wants to deal with Mike Pompeo and adds he should be replaced in talks by someone more mature, hours after it has announced its first weapons test since nuclear talks broke down.

April 18th-19th-20th:

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad meets senior officials from his strongest ally Russia in Damascus to discuss upcoming peace talks, renting out Tartus port and trade between the two countries.

April 21st:

In Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday more than 200 people are killed and at least 450 injured in bomb blasts that rip through churches and luxury hotels, the first major attack on the Indian Ocean island since the end of a civil war 10 years ago.

April 22nd:

Sri Lanka declares it is invoking emergency powers in the aftermath of devastating bomb attacks on hotels and churches, blamed on militants with foreign links, which have killed 290 people and wounded nearly 500.

April 23rd:

Islamic State claims responsibility for the bomb attacks in Sri Lanka that have killed 321 people.

April 24th:

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un arrives in the Russian city of Vladivostok for a summit he is likely to use to seek support from President Vladimir Putin while Pyongyang's nuclear talks with Washington are in limbo.

April 25th:

Vladimir Putin declares after holding his first face-to-face talks with Kim Jong-un that US security guarantees would probably not be enough to persuade Pyongyang to shut its nuclear program.

April 26th:

Kim Jong-un tells Vladimir Putin that peace and security on the Korean peninsula depend on the United States, warning that a state of hostility could easily return.

April 27th:

Sri Lanka's president Maithripala Sirisena outlaws two Islamist groups suspected to be behind the suicide bombings on churches and hotels while the wife and child of the suspected ringleader have been wounded during a military raid in safe house.

April 28th:

According to Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled al-Jarallah Kuwait is looking with concern at Iranian threats to block the Strait of Hormuz.

April 29th:

Islamic State's media network publishes a video message purporting to come from its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in what would be his first appearance since declaring the jihadists' now-defunct 'Caliphate' five years ago.

April 30th:

Juan Guaido makes his strongest call yet to the military to help him oust Nicolas Maduro, and violence breaks out at anti-government protests as the country hits a new crisis point after years of political and economic chaos.

May 1st:

Thousands of marchers protest in Venezuela to try to force Nicolas Maduro from power as tension grows between Russia and the United States over the political standoff in the OPEC-member nation.

May 2nd:

Venezuela's leadership makes a show of unity with top military chiefs and a court issues an arrest warrant for an opposition figure as the ruling socialists push back against US-backed attempts to oust Nicolas Maduro.

May 3rd:

Donald Trump declares he and Vladimir Putin have discussed the possibility of a new accord limiting nuclear arms that can eventually include China in what would be a major deal between the globe's top three atomic powers.

May 4th:

North Korea fires several «unidentified short-range projectiles» into the sea off its East coast, prompting South Korea to call on its communist neighbor to «stop acts that escalate military tension on the Korean Peninsula».

May 5th:

According to Gazan officials and the Israeli military, rockets and missiles from Gaza kill four civilians in Israel while Israeli strikes kill 14 Palestinians, most of them militants, in surging cross-border fighting.

May 6th:

A ceasefire to end a surge of deadly violence in the Gaza Strip and Southern Israel takes hold after hundreds of Palestinian rocket attacks and Israeli air strikes.

May 7th:

Britain's Conservative government and the opposition Labor Party resume Brexit talks to try to find a way to break the deadlock in Parliament over the country's departure from the European Union.

May 8th:

Donald Trump orders new sanctions on Iran, this time targeting the Islamic Republic's export revenues from its industrial metals sector, and vows to keep squeezing Tehran unless it «fundamentally alters» its policies.

May 9th:

North Korea fires what appear to be two short-range missiles in a likely protest by Kim Jong-un at the United States and after he and Donald Trump have failed to reach agreement on nuclear weapons and missiles at the February summit.

May 10th:

Iran's Revolutionary Guards declare Tehran will not negotiate with the United States about giving up their nuclear program and a senior cleric warns that a US navy fleet, headed toward the Gulf, can be «destroyed with one missile».

May 11th:

Three gunmen storm a luxury hotel in Pakistan's Southwestern port city of Gwadar, killing at least one guard and battling security forces inside.

May 12th:

The United States and China appear at a deadlock over trade negotiations as Washington demands promises of concrete changes to Chinese law and Beijing declares it «will not swallow any bitter fruit» that harms its interests.

May 13th-14th:

North Korea declares the seizure of one of its cargo ships by the United States is an illegal act that has violated the spirit of a summit between the two countries' leaders, and demands the return of the vessel without delay.

May 15th:

Chinese President Xi Jinping declares China has a glorious history of being open to the world and it will only be more open in his first public address since trade tension with the United States spiked last week.

May 16th:

Canada's Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland addresses Venezuela's crisis with her Cuban counterpart Bruno Rodriguez during a half-day trip to Havana, after her government recently has declared it is willing to help mediate.

May 17th:

Great Britain's tumultuous divorce from the European Union is again in disarray after the opposition Labor Party has declared last-ditch talks dead due to Theresa May's crumbling government.

May 18th:

Venezuelan Oil Minister Manuel Quevedo declares his country's economy and oil industry is under economic and financial siege by the US government.

May 19th-20th:

Into the Iraqi capital Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, which houses government buildings and diplomatic missions, a rocket is fired falling near the US Embassy but causing no casualties.

May 21st:

Theresa May sets out a «new deal» for Britain's departure from the European Union, offering sweeteners to opposition parties in her fourth attempt to break an *impasse* in Parliament over Brexit.

May 22nd:

Theresa May resists growing calls to resign, vowing to press on despite mounting opposition from lawmakers and even some of her own Ministers to her latest Brexit gambit.

May 23rd:

Theresa May is clinging to power after her final Brexit gambit has backfired, overshadowing a European election that has shown a United Kingdom still riven over its divorce from the EU.

May 24th:

Theresa May declares she will quit on June 7th after failing to deliver Brexit, setting up a contest that will install a new British Prime Minister who could pursue a cleaner break with the European Union.

May 25th:

French police hunts for a man who has left a bomb in a pedestrian shopping street in the central French city of Lyon that has wounded 13 people, including a 10-year-old girl.

May 26th:

According to official projections parties committed to strengthening the European Union hold on to two-thirds of seats in the EU Parliament, though far-right and nationalist opponents see strong gains.

May 27th:

European parties committed to closer European Union integration begin bargaining over jobs and policy, after an election to the EU Parliament which has fragmented the center but has given only limited gains to nationalists.

May 28th:

The European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker declares that European Union will not renegotiate the Brexit deal that Theresa May has agreed, as concerns grow that a successor to May could trigger a confrontation with the bloc.

May 29th:

The European Union calls for a ceasefire in Syria's Idlib province and declares that Russia, Turkey, Iran and the Syrian government must protect civilians under siege.

May 30th:

Trump's adviser Jared Kushner and US Middle East envoy Jason Greenblatt meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a visit to the region to drum up support for an economic

conference in Bahrain to be held in June, but they give no hint about whether its political component would be further postponed by tumultuous events in Israel.

May 31st:

Mexico declares it wants to sharpen existing measures in its bid to narrow a flood of Central American migrants to the US border, ahead of planned meetings in Washington over tariffs threatened by Donald Trump.

June 1st:

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani suggests Iran may be willing to hold talks if the United States will show respect and will follow international rules, but Tehran must not be pressured into negotiations.

June 2nd:

Donald Trump arrives in Great Britain on a State visit laden with diplomatic peril, having already humiliated outgoing Theresa May over Brexit and challenged her to be tougher in dealing with China's Huawei.

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June 3rd:

The Lima Group regional bloc and EU-led contact group on Venezuela call on Latin America and the broader international community to play a more active role in restoring democracy to Venezuela.

June 4th:

Donald Trump promises Great Britain a «phenomenal» post-Brexit trade deal, dismisses differences over China's Huawei and glossed over other disagreements as he heaps praise on the United States' closest ally.

June 5th:

Vladimir Putin declares after talks in Moscow with Xi Jinping that Moscow and Beijing want the situation in Venezuela to stabilize.

June 6th:

Donald Trump declares he will decide whether to carry out his threat to hit Beijing with tariffs on at least \$300 billion in Chinese goods after a meeting of leaders of the world's largest economies to be held at the end of June.

June 7th:

Donald Trump declares there is a «good chance» that the United States will be able to reach a deal with Mexico over a surge of migrants on their common border, although his administration is still pushing ahead with a plan to slap import tariffs on all Mexican goods since the half of June.

June 8th:

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi declares that additional sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States on June 7th 2019 show that Washington's offer of talks is not genuine.

June 9th:

Boris Johnson, the leading candidate to succeed Theresa May as Great Britain's prime minister, declares he will withhold an already agreed 39-billion-pound (\$49.6 billion) Brexit payment until the European Union gives Britain better withdrawal terms.

June 10th:

The head of the UN atomic watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Yukiya Amano declares Iran has followed through on a threat to accelerate its production of enriched uranium, departing from his usual guarded language to say he is worried about increasing tension.

June 11th-12th:

In Hong Kong thousands brave thunderstorms for a fresh wave of protests against a proposed extradition bill that would allow people to be sent to mainland China for trial, but the Chinese-ruled city's Chief Executive Carrie Lam declares she will not back down.

June 13th:

In the Gulf of Oman two oil tankers are attacked and left adrift, driving up oil prices and stoking fears of a new confrontation between Iran and the United States.

June 14th:

Cracks appear in the support base for a proposed Hong Kong law to allow extraditions to China, and opponents of the bill declare they will stage more demonstrations after hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets.

June 15th:

Saudi Arabia calls for swift action to secure Gulf energy supplies, after the United States have blamed Iran for attacks on two oil tankers in a vital oil shipping route that have raised fears of broader confrontation in the region.

June 16th:

Carrie Lam apologizes to its people as an estimated 1 million-plus black-clad protesters insist that she resign over her handling of the bill that would allow citizens to be sent to mainland China for trial.

June 17th:

Iran announces it will soon breach limits on the amount of enriched uranium it can stockpile under the 2015 international agreement, in a new point of contention with the United States, which accuse Tehran of "nuclear blackmail."

June 18th:

Donald Trump declares he is prepared to take military action to stop Tehran having a nuclear bomb but leaves open whether he will sanction the use of force to protect Gulf oil supplies.

June 19th:

A rocket hit a site in Southern Iraq used by foreign oil companies, including US energy giant ExxonMobil, wounding three people and threatening to further escalate US-Iran tensions in the region.

June 20th:

Fervent Brexit campaigner Boris Johnson and Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt emerge as the only two candidates left in the race to become British Prime Minister, with the flamboyant Johnson odds-on favorite to win.

June 21st:

In Amman hundreds of Jordan Islamists march to denounce Washington's peace plan to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and demand their government boycott a conference in Bahrain that will examine the project.

June 22nd:

The White House outlines a \$50 billion Middle East economic plan that would create a global investment fund to lift the Palestinian and neighboring Arab State economies, and funds a \$5 billion transportation corridor to connect the West Bank and Gaza.

June 23rd:

Arab politicians and commentators value Donald Trump's Middle East \$50 billion economic vision with a mixture of derision and exasperation, although some in the Gulf call for it to be given a chance.

June 24th:

Donald Trump targets Iranian Supreme leader *ayatollah* Ali Khamenei and other senior Iranian officials with new US sanctions, looking for a fresh blow to Iran's economy after Tehran's downing of an unmanned American drone.

June 25th:

Donald Trump threatens to obliterate parts of Iran if it attacks «anything American», in a new war of words with Iran which condemns the latest US sanctions on Tehran and calls White House actions «mentally retarded».

June 26th:

United States and Turkey appear to make no progress during talks at NATO headquarters toward resolving a major dispute over Ankara's plans to acquire a Russian air defense system, just ahead of its expected July delivery.

June 27th:

Iran is on course to breach a threshold in its nuclear agreement by accumulating more enriched uranium than permitted, although it has not done so yet by a deadline it set for July 4th.

June 28th:

In Osaka Donald Trump declares he is open to a potentially «historic» trade deal with Xi Jinping, as they begin talks that could ease tensions or plunge the world's two largest economies into a deeper trade war.

June 29th:

Donald Trump proposes a weekend meeting with Kim Jong-un at the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea.

June 30th:

Donald Trump is the first US President to set foot in North Korea when he meets its leader Kim Jong-un in the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas in view of resuming stalled nuclear talks.