

# Quarterly Review of International Relations

April-June 2018

CHIARA D'AURIA

## **April 1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> :**

The group in control of the last rebel bastion near Damascus appears to agree to a deal for its fighters to make peace with the government or quit the eastern Ghouta *enclave*.

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

China appreciates North Korea's «important efforts» to ease tension on the Korean peninsula, after both sides stay focused on talks.

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

US administration proposes duties of 25% on Chinese imports for supposed violation of American intellectual property made by Beijing. China immediately replies with a proposal of duties on import of 106 US goods.

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

The German court of Schleswig-Holstein rejects an extradition request for Catalonia's former leader Carles Puigdemont on the charge of rebellion for his role in the campaign for the region's independence.

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

Israeli troops shoot dead four Palestinian protesters and wound at least 200 along the Israel-Gaza border, raising tension in the area.

## **April 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> :**

In the Syrian city of Duma at least 70 people are killed by a suspected chemical attack, in one of the worst happenings in the rebels stronghold in East Ghouta, at the gates of Damascus.

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

Syria and its main ally Russia blame Israel for carrying out a military action on a Syrian air base near Homs which has followed reports of a poison gas attack by President Bashar al-Assad's forces on a rebel-held town.

## **April 10<sup>th</sup>:**

Tension grows between Russia and USA after chemical attack in Duma, ascribed to Damascus regime, which invites OPCW to investigate. Washington asks to UN Security Council to vote a draft resolution to create a new independent investigation mechanism on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

## **April 11<sup>th</sup>:**

US President Donald Trump warns Russia of imminent military action in Syria over a suspected poison gas attack, declaring that missiles «will be coming» and lambasting Moscow for standing by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

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

French President Emmanuel Macron, interviewed on live by TF1, declares to have the evidence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria by Bashar al-Assad's regime.

## **April 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> :**

The United States and its ally France assault Syria's Bashar al-Assad at the United Nations for using chemical weapons at the prospect of US-led military action that could lead to confrontation with Russia in the Middle East.

## **April 15<sup>th</sup>:**

US ambassador at the UN Nikki Haley declares that the United States are ready to use new sanctions against Moscow after the military action in Syria. Emmanuel Macron, Theresa May and Donald Trump

declare to be satisfied of the aerial raids to weaken the chemical weapons program of Damascus, occurred on April 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>.

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

General Director of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Ahmet Üzümcü confirms that the inspections in Duma have been not possible because Russia and Syria consider there are not conditions of security, causing the accusations on Syria and Russia from USA and Great Britain.

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

In Duma Russian soldiers find a laboratory used by militiamen to manufacture chemical weapons while OPCW's inspectors arrive in the city.

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

Cuba's Raul Castro moves closer to retiring as president as the country's parliament proposes Miguel Díaz-Canel to replace him, in a shift that will usher in the island's first non-Castro leader since the 1959 revolution.

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

As declared by South Korean President Moon Jae-in, North Korea expresses its commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and is not seeking conditions, while the United States vow to maintain maximum pressure on Pyongyang.

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

The Ministry of Health of Gaza declares that there are at least 3000 Palestinians taking part to the riots along the defensive barrier with Israel and that the death toll is 4 Palestinians which have died during the clashes with Israeli army.

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

In view of the two historic meetings with Southkorean president Moon Jae-in on April 27th and US president Donald Trump in the following weeks, Pyongyang's regime leader Kim Jong-un announces that: «North Korea will not make any other missile or nuclear test, there is no need anymore».

**April 22<sup>nd</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> :**

The Afghan Minister of Health Wahid Majroh declares that at least 48 people have been killed and 50 injured in a *kamikaze* attack in an electoral poll in a school in Kabul in view of October 2018's general elections. ISIS claims the attack.

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

US President Donald Trump warns Iran not to follow through with threats to restart its nuclear program, as he and French President Emmanuel Macron, during his official visit to the White House, try to find common ground on saving an international agreement on Iran's nuclear ambitions.

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

Emmanuel Macron concludes his official visit in the United States with a speech at the US Congress, declaring that USA must be involved in a «strong multilateralism» and that the only option is to reinforce international cooperation.

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

Emmanuel Macron declares that probably the USA will leave the nuclear agreement with Iran.

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

In the village of Panmunjon happens the historical meeting between the two Korean leaders Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in, during which is established the complete denuclearization in the Korean peninsula, the transformation of the 1953 armistice in a peace treaty by 2018 and the joint reduction of conventional weapons.

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

After the historical meeting between the two Korean leaders, US president Donald Trump declares to be optimistic in establishing a summit with Kim Jong-un.

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

British Prime Minister Theresa May's office declares that leaders of Great Britain, France and Germany agree the Iran nuclear deal is the best way of stopping Tehran from gaining nuclear weapons.

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

Explosions in the Afghan capital Kabul kill at least 26 people, including nine journalists who have arrived to report on an initial blast, and are apparently targeted by a suicide bomber.

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

North and South Korea begin dismantling loudspeakers that blared propaganda across their heavily fortified border, fulfilling a promise made at their historic summit occurred on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

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

US President Donald Trump extends to June 1<sup>st</sup> the term for imposing duties on aluminum and steel, postponing the decision on their entry into force and potentially putting off a commercial war.

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

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif declares that US demands to change its 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers are unacceptable and that «Iran will not renegotiate what was agreed years ago and has been implemented».

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

President Donald Trump tells that the date and location have been set for a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, building suspense for the unprecedented talks.

**May 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>:**

Iranian president Hassan Rouhani in a speech to the nation declares that if the United States will retreat from the agreement signed in 2015 between Iran and Western powers, will face an «historical regret».

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

Iranian president Hassan Rouhani hints that Iran can remain in its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers even if the United States drop out but Tehran will fiercely resist US pressure to limit its influence in the Middle East.

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

US president Donald Trump declares that for their own security the United States cannot remain in the 2015 nuclear agreement subscribed between Western countries and Iran.

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

Dismayed European allies seek to salvage the international nuclear pact and preserve their business with Iran after president Donald Trump has pulled the United States out of the landmark accord and has ordered sanctions on Tehran.

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

Leaders of the United States and North Korea will meet for the first time when Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un hold a summit on June 12<sup>th</sup> in Singapore where the US side will try to persuade Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons.

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

Iranian Foreign Affairs minister Javad Zafir declares that Iran is ready to restart its large scale production of enriched uranium if the 2015 agreement on nuclear would decay.

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

North Korea schedules the dismantlement of its nuclear test site for sometime between May 23<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, depending on weather conditions, in order to uphold its pledge to discontinue nuclear tests.

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

Police scores the background of Khamzat Azimov, a Chechnya-born Frenchman who has killed a man in a knife attack in Paris on May 12<sup>th</sup>'s night, questioning the parents and a friend of the 21-year old, who has been defined previously as a potential security risk.

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

Israeli troops shoot dead dozens of Palestinian protesters on the Gaza border as the United States have moved their embassy to Jerusalem, a move that has fueled Palestinian anger and drawn foreign criticism for undermining peace efforts.

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

Palestinians bury the dead from the bloodiest day in Gaza in years, after Israeli forces killed 60 Palestinians near the Gaza-Israel border during demonstrations against the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem.

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

US President Donald Trump acknowledges it is unclear if his summit with North Korea would go ahead after Pyongyang has threatened to pull out of the unprecedented meeting.

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

North Korea's chief negotiator calls the South Korean government «ignorant and incompetent», denounces US-South Korean air combat drills and threatens to halt all talks with the South unless its demands are met.

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

In Sochi Russian President Vladimir Putin declares at a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel that he will stand up to any attempts by US President Donald Trump to block a Russian-German gas pipeline project.

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

The European Union's energy chief Miguel Arias Cañete sees to reassure Iran that the bloc has remained committed to salvaging a nuclear deal with Tehran despite US President Donald Trump's decision to exit the accord and to impose new sanctions on Iran.

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

South Korean President Moon Jae-in and US President Donald Trump hold discussions to ensure that the North Korea-US summit remains on track after North Korea has threatened to pull out of the high-level talks.

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

The United States demand Iran make sweeping changes (from dropping its nuclear program to pulling out of the Syrian civil war) or face severe economic sanctions as the Trump administration has hardened its approach to Tehran.

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

Alongside a meeting with South Korean president Moon Jae-in US president Donald Trump declares that the summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un could be postponed.

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

North Korea accepts the list of 8 South Korean journalists, 4 of press agencies and 4 of broadcasting TVs, named to assist to the ceremony of closing its nuclear tests' site in Punggye-ri.

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

US President Donald Trump calls off a historic summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un scheduled for June 12<sup>th</sup>, citing Pyongyang's «open hostility», and warns that the US military is ready in the event of any reckless acts by North Korea.

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

US efforts to sustain and possibly intensify its «maximum pressure» campaign on North Korea are entering a perilous phase as a potential breakdown in diplomacy with Pyongyang raises fears that China may loosen its enforcement of international sanctions.

**May 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>:**

South Korean President Moon Jae-in holds a surprise meeting at the Panmunjom border village with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in an effort to ensure that a high-stakes summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump takes place successfully.

**May 28<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>:**

Kim Yong Chol, vice chairman of the ruling Workers' Party's Central Committee and formerly head of a top North Korean military intelligence agency, is headed to New York for talks with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the latest indication that the summit between President Donald Trump and North Korea's leader may go ahead.

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

Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon declares that Benjamin Herman, which on May 29<sup>th</sup> 2018 has killed three people in Liege screaming «*Allah Akbar*», had already killed a man the night before the slaughter. The killer has been killed by police after barricading himself in a school and it is likely he has radicalized himself in jail.

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

While in Italy a 5Stars-Liga's government is formed, under the leadership of professor Giuseppe Conte, avoiding the risk of new political elections, US president Donald Trump imposes to EU duties on aluminum and steel.

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

Kim Yong Chol is expected to visit the White House to hand over a letter for US president Donald Trump from North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, in which it is expressed the North Korean leader's interest in meeting without making any significant concessions or threats.

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

US President Donald Trump declares he will hold a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on June 12<sup>th</sup> 2018 in Singapore.

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

The United States are considering intensified naval patrols in the South China Sea in a bid to challenge China's growing militarization of the waterway, actions that could further raise the stakes in one of the world's most volatile areas.

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

The United States call on members of the Organization of American States (OAS) to suspend Venezuela from the group and ramp up pressure on President Nicolas Maduro's government with new sanctions.

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

The United States are pressing their European allies to get more NATO battalions, ships and planes ready for combat, in a fresh move to shore up NATO's deterrence against any Russian attack.

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

Iranian UN envoys declare Teheran will not cooperate more fully with atomic inspectors until a standoff over its nuclear deal is resolved.

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

In Charlevoix, Canada, the leaders of the Group of Seven rich nations head for their summit, more divided than at any time in the group's 42-year history, as US President Donald Trump's «America First» policies risk causing a global trade war and deep diplomatic schisms.

**June 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>:**

Top US allies scramble to keep a Group of Seven nations summit from veering off track as President Donald Trump vowed to deal with «unfair trade practices» by Canada and the European Union.

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

US president Donald Trump retires his signature to the final G7 document in controversy with Canadian premier Justin Trudeau who has criticized US duties on aluminum and steel defining them as «an insult for Canadians».

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

US President Donald Trump declares his historic summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Singapore may «work out very nicely» as officials from both countries will seek to narrow differences on how to end a nuclear stand-off on the Korean peninsula.

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

In Singapore US president Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un sign an historical agreement on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

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

Italy summons France's envoy and angrily rejects French criticism of its immigration policies, escalating a diplomatic standoff that widens one of Europe's main political fault lines.

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

US State secretary Mike Pompeo declares that tough sanctions will remain on North Korea until its complete denuclearization.

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

US president Donald Trump announces hefty tariffs on \$50 billion of Chinese imports as Beijing threatens to respond in kind, in a move that looks set to ignite a trade war between the world's two largest economies. China's Commerce Ministry declares it will respond with tariffs «of the same scale and strength» and that any previous trade deals with Trump are «invalid».

**June 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>:**

During the official visit of the Italian prime minister Giuseppe Conte, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declares she wants to support Italy in its efforts to reduce the number of migrants arriving on its shores, possibly handling asylum requests for Europe in non-European countries including Libya.

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

In Berlin German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French president Emmanuel Macron agree to create a budget for the euro zone and hail a «new chapter» for the currency union, but they leave the details to be worked out later with other members of the 19-country bloc.

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

UE Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem declares that the European Commission has adopted the regulation with countermeasures to US duties on steel and aluminum, for a list of products for 2,8 billions of euros, which will come into force starting from June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018.

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

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte says a draft European agreement on migration has been withdrawn after his meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel over the issue that is splitting Europe.

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

The United States and South Korea agree to indefinitely suspend two exchange program training exercises in the aftermath of the summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

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

US secretary of State Mike Pompeo warns Iran not to pursue nuclear weapons, saying it will face the «wrath of the entire world» if it does so, but adds that he hopes it will never be necessary for the United States to take military action against the country.

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

In Brussels sixteen EU leaders meet for emergency talks on immigration, hoping to get a deal for the full summit of all 28 States on June 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. They will endorse further tightening of their external borders and giving more money to foreign countries to prevent people from setting sail for Europe. But they cannot agree on how to share out those asylum seekers who make it.

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

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan wins sweeping new executive powers after his victory in landmark elections that also have seen his Islamist-rooted AK Party and its nationalist allies secure a majority in Parliament.

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

President Hassan Rouhani promises Iranians the government will be able to handle the economic pressure of new US sanctions amid a second day of demonstrations in protest at financial hardship and a weakening rial.

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

European Council President Donald Tusk exposes the issues that 28 UE partners will face during 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> summit in a long letter to the Heads of State and government, in which he invites the leaders of EU countries to converge on some themes. Tusk particularly insists on borders' control, tackling illegal immigration, to improve relationships with the countries of origin and transit to stop the flows. Few words are spent on asylum, hospitality and integration of legal immigration, the real division's issues on which European governments' *sheepas* are working to find possible compromises.

**June 28<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>:**

The 28 leaders of the European Union find an agreement on the European Council's conclusions, including on immigration, at the end of a 13-hours-and-a-half summit. In the final document of the Union a new approach comes on sea rescues; up to now there will be actions based on the sharing and coordinated by the member States. There is a new proposal to consent the landing and in case the transit of immigrants also in third countries under the coordination of the United Nation Human Right Council (UNHRC). And in Europe it is possible to create reception centers in the member States but only on a voluntary base.

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

German Chancellor Angela Merkel obtains the commitment of 14 EU member States to fasten the refusal of entry of migrants, according to a measure of CSU Bavarian party, which was generated by a government crisis. According to an 8 pages document delivered by the chancellor to the parties, the asylum seekers registered in other States will be sent in the so-called 'anchor-centers', required by the German Ministry of Interior.