



Global Political Trends Center
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Regional Updates

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CYPRUS

1. Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu visited Turkish Cyprus on December 1st, stating that Turkey will not hesitate to take necessary steps for a permanent solution to the Cyprus question at a joint press conference in Nicosia.
2. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Greek Cyprus on December 1st where he reiterated Russia's hope for a viable and just solution, based on the relevant UN Security Council decisions, with full respect of the interests of the two communities on the island.
3. US Secretary of State John Kerry held separate talks with Turkish and Greek Cypriot Presidents on December 3rd stating that an end to the division of Cyprus was within reach.
4. On December 9th the third Trilateral Summit between Greece, Egypt and Cyprus in Athens took place aiming at promoting peace, stability, security and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean in various fields.
5. On December 11th the European Commission approved the new financial assistance programme for the Turkish Cypriot community, worth €32 million from the EU budget within the Aid Programme to promote the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community and to improve contacts between the two communities.
6. On December 11th the U.N. Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide, was in Ankara for talks with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. Eide expressed that security should not be reduced just to a question of troops and military issues, and that security is first and foremost living together in peace in a successful federal construction.
7. On December 16th the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that he was encouraged by the progress in the negotiations on the Cyprus problem during his end of the year press conference at the UN Headquarters.
8. On December 20th Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot President Mustafa Akıncı met with members of the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) in the UN Protected Area within the framework of UN-brokered Cyprus peace talks aiming towards the island's reunification. According to the UN statement, the leaders were briefed on the progress and the challenges of the CMP.



EGYPT

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Egypt's High Electoral Committee (HEC) announced that both stages of Egypt's parliamentary elections produced a 28.3% turnout rate.
2. Following the criticism of police in the media, President el-Sisi said in a speech that police officers who commit mistakes will be punished. In the weeks following the speech, several police officers were taken into custody and sentenced to serve prison terms for their actions.
3. At least two men threw firebombs into a nightclub in central Cairo, setting off an explosion and fires that killed 18 people.
4. El-Sisi, once again, called for the formation of a joint Arab military force to restore political and security stability.
5. In an effort to tighten security after the crash of the Russian plane, Egypt has shifted to an electronic registration database of travelers and hired London-based global consultancy Control Risks to assess the security of Egyptian airports.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. During the fiscal year 2014-2015, Egypt's GDP grew by 4.2%; Minister Ashraf al-Araby said the government is working to increase the growth rate to 5-5.5% during 2016-2017.
2. Several companies allegedly run by Muslim Brotherhood members were seized by the state due to their ties to the outlawed organization.
3. The Egyptian government plans to hold talks with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates to improve economic cooperation, and secure economic aid. In the same context, Saudi Arabia's King Salman ordered that Saudi investments in Egypt exceed \$8 billion.
4. On December 19, Egypt and the World Bank signed \$1 billion in a development policy finance operation to support the Government's economic reforms program across key economic areas.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. President el-Sisi met with world leaders on the sidelines of the UN summit on climate change in Paris.
2. Egypt was unanimously voted to lead the chairmanship of the UN Counter Terrorism Committee in the UN Security Council in January 2016.
3. Egypt's Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, held a telephone call with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov to discuss approaches to the Syrian crisis and uniting opposition groups to battle terrorism.
4. In the year's third summit between Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus, the three leaders of the countries underlined their cooperation on stability, security, and trade in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

REGIONAL UPDATES: EGYPT

5. The Egyptian-led, multinational investigation into the Russian plane crash concluded that the crash was not caused by terrorism. Later in the month, Russian Security Services purported to have identified the groups potentially responsible for the plane crash.
6. A report published by the British government supported the conclusion that affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood should be considered a possible indicator of extremism.
7. Foreign Minister Shoukry attended the meeting in New York City for talks on bringing the Syrian government and opposition groups to the negotiating table.
8. In an urgent Arab League meeting in Cairo, Foreign Minister Sameh Shourky called for the “immediate and unconditioned withdrawal of Turkish forces from Iraq”.
9. In late December, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan reached an agreement on the studies to be conducted on the repercussions of the Renaissance Dam as well as the disagreement resolution to regarding the filling of the dam.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

Israeli and Turkish officials met in Switzerland in mid-December in order to firm up principles for a reconciliation agreement. Reports confirmed that an outline for the agreement has been reached, with some issues such as the Gaza blockade remaining unresolved. Two days after it was known that Turkey and Israel are inching towards an agreement, Turkish President Erdogan and Hamas leader Mashal met in Istanbul – no details on the meeting were released. Moreover, Saleh al-Arouri, one of the planners of a terror attack that killed three Israeli teenagers in June 2014, was expelled from Turkey upon Israel's request.



The clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem escalated throughout the month. Several vehicular assaults and stabbing attacks were followed by a shooting attack that left two people dead and several wounded in Tel Aviv in the first day of 2016. On December 3, the Israeli army demolished the West Bank home of a Palestinian accused of overseeing the killing of a Jewish settler couple - as means of deterrence. On the same day, Israeli security services arrested several young Jewish extremists accused of burning to death a Palestinian family in July.

During the month, Israel struck several Hezbollah targets near the Lebanese border. A senior Hezbollah leader, who was one of the longest prisoners in Israel, has been killed in an air strike in Damascus. Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah said that retaliation for the assassination is forthcoming.

At an event commemorating the 51th anniversary of the PLO, President Abbas said that the Israeli public is 'deceived' by leaders and urged Israel to "get out of our lives and our land." Referring to the situation in the region and to Abbas' similar statements during their meeting in November, US Secretary of State John Kerry warned that key Israeli policies were "imperiling" the viability of a two-state solution. He added that "valid questions as to how long the Palestinian Authority will remain if the current situation continues."

SYRIA

1. Syria's president Bashar al-Assad told Czech TV that Russia's involvement in his country's war has led to significant changes, including the "shrinking" of the Islamic State, al-Nusra Front and the other groups on December 2nd.
2. The UK launched first Syria air strikes on December 3rd, targeting the Omar oil fields under IS control in eastern Syria.
3. Germany's parliament voted to send German military support to the US-led coalition fighting Islamic State militants in Syria on December 5th.
4. Syria's disparate political and armed opposition factions came together in Saudi Arabia on December 8th for a conference aimed at pursuing peace talks to seek a unified front. Meanwhile, Kurdish factions and other opposition groups gathered on the same day for a meeting in northeastern Syria's Hasakeh province to launch the two-day Syrian Democratic Conference.
5. On December 15th Saudi Arabia said 34 mainly Muslim nations joined a new military alliance to fight terrorism. Saudi Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman said the new alliance would coordinate efforts against extremists in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Egypt and Afghanistan.
6. On December 17th finance ministers from the 15 nations on the UN Security Council adopted a resolution aimed at starving the so-called Islamic State of funds. The summit was the first of its kind in the international body's 70-year history.
7. On December 18th the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved a resolution endorsing an international road map for a Syrian peace process. The U.N. plans to hold peace talks in Geneva towards the end of January.
8. Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem said on December 24th during his visit to Beijing that Syria is ready to take part in peace talks in Geneva.



WESTERN BALKANS

1. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:

Bosnia and Herzegovina marked the 20th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Treaty on December 14th. Politicians who represent the Federation consider the Dayton Peace Treaty as a main obstacle to the progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, in the Republic of Serbia, Dayton presents the most important guarantee of its autonomy. Prior to the marking of the anniversary of the DPT, state security agency SIPA arrested a few Serbian nationals on suspicion of committing war crimes. This action provoked new tensions between Sarajevo and Banja Luka.



2. KOSOVO:

Kosovo is currently going through a serious political crisis caused by two main issues. The first issue concerns the application of the Brussels Agreement and the establishment of Community of Serbian Municipalities (CSM). The Constitutional Court of Kosovo decided that the establishment of the CSM is not completely consistent with the Constitution on 23th December.

3. FYR MACEDONIA:

Macedonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Poposki made first official visit to Athens on December 16th. The main topic of talks with Greek officials was a dispute over Macedonia's name. Currently neither side is ready for a compromise regarding the name dispute. FYR Macedonia is facing serious problems due to the refugee crisis. To prevent the entry of immigrants Macedonian authorities have erected a protective fence on the border with Greece.

4. MONTENEGRO:

Montenegro received an invitation for NATO membership on December 2nd. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said he expected accession talks to go quickly, suggesting that the country might become a member at the next summit of NATO leaders in July 2016. Joining NATO requires defense reforms and integration with NATO defense structures. The final accession is subject to approval of all NATO members and the Montenegrin parliament.

5. SERBIA:

Serbia penned the first two chapters in the negotiations with the EU on December 14th. Chapter 32 regards financial control, while Chapter 35 is dedicated to the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Chapter 35 also implies the implementation of the Brussels Agreement which part of the Serbian public see as a formal recognition of Kosovo.



Global Political Trends Center (GPoT Center) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research institution established under the auspices of Istanbul Kültür University in 2009.

GPoT Center was founded with the aim to support reconciliation and non-violent solutions to international as well as domestic issues through dialogue. Our mission is to contribute to stability, democratization and peace through organizing multitrack diplomacy meetings, conducting innovative and independent research, and encouraging informed debates in the media on key issues affecting Turkey and the world.

GPoT Center serves as a platform for the free exchange of views and information on political, social and economic matters concerning a variety of parties and segments of society. We aim to achieve our mission by routinely bringing together opinion leaders, government officials, policy makers, analysts, scholars, experts and members of the media from Turkey and abroad.

Our publications can be downloaded from our website for free. They are also accessible through online libraries worldwide, such as the International Relations and Security Network in Zurich, Europe's World in Brussels, and Columbia University Press in New York. Additionally, you can find our books on Google Books and Amazon Kindle.

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