

Report # 103
BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
Turkey, GCC, FC, Central Asia, India & China
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Weekly Report from 16 January 2010 to 22 January 2010
Presentation: 27 January 2010

This report is based on the review of news items focusing on political, economic, social and geo-strategic developments in various regions namely; Turkey, GCC, Fertile Crescent, Central Asia, India and China from 16 January 2010 to 22 January 2010 as have been collected by interns.

TURKEY

Political Front:

Kurdish and Turkish journalists held one day meeting to discuss the role of media. Bar associations from 41 cities throughout Turkey met in Diyarbakir over the weekend to discuss the government's democratization initiative and urged the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to withdraw from Turkey and to bring an end to military operations. A recently conducted survey indicates that a considerable part of the Turkish nation believes that a pro-coup formation exists within the military, but a larger part does not think military members would dare to stage a coup d'état. Military has denied allegations that they have been involved in planning military coups to topple the government. Turkey's top court has annulled legislation allowing military personnel to be tried by civil courts.

Geo-strategic Front:

Turkey had exchange of diplomatic visits with Indi, Mauritania, Serbia, Syria and Lebanon. Turkish-Israeli relations remained strained since Israeli complaint against Turkish *drama*. Meanwhile Turkey has reiterated her commitment with Palestine. Turkish cordial ties with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, US and EU remained potent.

Social Front:

Ban on smoking has been successful in Turkey. The heavy snow and high speed winds have been affecting Istanbul, causing black outs as well as related natural gas and water outages.

Economic Front:

Turkey and Russia have decided to remove a large part of previously erected obstacles to the shuttle trade. Meanwhile Turkish stock exchange remained fluctuating. Despite economic crisis 2009 proved to be a good year for Turkish tourist industry.

GCC

Geo-strategic Front:

Yemeni warplanes struck outside a desert village near the border with Saudi Arabia on Friday, killing six Al-Qaeda operatives, including the group's top military leader in the country.

Meanwhile Yemen decided not to issue tourist visas on arrival to foreigners in an effort to prevent militants entering the country. Turkish Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the headquarters of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Saudi Arabia and expressed his satisfaction over the 57-member group's increasing role on the world stage. A Kuwaiti MP has lashed out at his government after it announced plans to fund the building of a hospital in Basra and homes for Iraqi farmers, charging that it was making "unjustified concessions" to Iraq. While Tehran said that it was ready to talk with the Kuwaitis on the "thorny" maritime border issue. All the while Gulf countries remained quite active in sending relief packages to the victims of Haiti.

Social Front:

The UAE has become a popular destination among expatriate workers from all over the world as employment prospects in the country have increased by up to 8.3 per cent annually. The Saudi Passport Department has launched a service to enable exit and re-entry visas to be issued online. On another side, in an effort to curb dengue fever from spreading in Jeddah, the local Department of Health Affairs has added pharmacists to its war on dengue. Saudi government seems keen to relax regulations governing the marriages between Saudis and non-Saudis. A revised draft law prepared by the Interior Ministry and the Cabinet's Committee of Experts allows government ministers, judges, Shoura members and students on foreign scholarships to marry non-Saudi women. The new law, which replaces the old one issued 38 years ago, has to be passed by the Council of Ministers.

Economic Front:

Banking sector in Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia has observed remarkable growth. Stock exchange of Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Oman however fell sharply. Meanwhile property market in Qatar also witnessed a downturn. As part of a growing business interest in foreign countries, Kuwait has recently signed two investment projects with Kazakhstan.

FERTILE CRESCENT

Political Front:

The Muslim Brotherhood elected a new supreme guide, Mohamed Badae' Sami, to head the group's Guidance Office. The list of nearly 500 candidates barred from running in Iraq's upcoming parliamentary poll has yet to be finalized, but it is already fanning sectarian tensions. Failure to implement sufficient electoral reform ahead of municipal elections would raise tensions among Lebanese voters. Palestinian President Mahmud Abbass has asked Obama regime to negotiate final borders of a Palestinian state with Israel. He further denied any chances of resumption of peace talks without complete freeze of Israeli settlements.

Geo-strategic Front:

More than 200 Indonesian Muslims protested in Jakarta against an underground wall being built to block a network of tunnels crossing Egypt's border with the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile in

Lebanon about 200 people took part in the protest near Egypt's embassy, accusing Egyptian authorities of acting like an agent of Israel. Crowds set fire to US and Israeli flags.

Social Front:

Government of Egypt has announced to send aid packages to the earthquake victims of Haiti. Meanwhile floods in several parts of Egypt have claimed the lives of 15 people in the past four days and left a trail of destroyed houses in its wake. Lebanon also sent relief packages to Haiti. At the same time Lebanese tourist industry has performed remarkably well.

Economic Front:

Although Egypt's GDP growth rate is expected to rise to 5.2 percent in 2010 and 6 percent by 2011, high food imports represent a significant burden on the economy. Meanwhile attempts to boost Egyptian exports have long been incorporated into Egypt's trade strategy, with expanded trade relationships with the US, China, Russia and India planned or under implementation. Iraqi Kurds have allowed central government to collect royalties of oil exports originating in their region. Figures released by the Directorate of Real Estate indicate that the number of property-sale transactions in Lebanon and the value of such transactions witnessed an increase in 2009.

CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front:

Kazakh opposition party Azat (Freedom) has requested the OSCE member-states to discuss with Astana the issue of putting opposition representatives on the list of Astana official delegation in the Organization. The Kyrgyz Constitutional Court has rejected President Kurmanbek Bakiev's proposal for a still-to-be-created Presidential Council to appoint an interim president in emergencies; by saying that it would strengthen the sitting President. The son of jailed former Kyrgyz Defense Minister has warned to start an opposition campaign against the government. At least six active members of an extremist religious organization Hizb ut-Tahrir have been arrested in Kyrgyzstan. Election preparations are on the way in Tajikistan.

Geo-strategic Front:

The Azerbaijani MPs would soon visit the US and would register their protest against the U.S Congress's decision to allocate funds to the Armenian community of the Nagorno-Karabakh. The United States urged Kyrgyzstan to use its chairmanship of Europe's main security and human rights watchdog to lead by example and improve its own record. A Kyrgyz border guard has been shot by Uzbek border forces. The United Nations has wholeheartedly welcomed the position of Turkmenistan playing a special role in the process of building peaceful life and socio-economic development in neighboring Afghanistan.

Social Front:

Human Rights Watch has expressed serious concern regarding violation of rights of Right defenders in Azerbaijan. A Newspaper editor in Chief has been sentenced for 13 years in Azerbaijan. Meanwhile 2010 State's budget has placed special emphasis on social spending. Law

enforcement agencies get about 10 thousand domestic violence claims annually in Kyrgyzstan. The Tajik Culture ministry has made plan to tightly control Islamic Study Board in the Republic. Turkmenistan's president has ordered the removal of a prominent statue of former dictator Saparmurat Niyazov, in a move to assert his own authority and chip away at the personality cult of his predecessor. A drunken Saudi diplomat has been caught in Uzbekistan.

Economic Front:

The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) has increased volumes of gas exports 57.1 percent as compared to 12.1 percent in Nov. Meanwhile SOCAR intends to double gas supply to Russia by 2011. A Kazakh oil producer half-owned by China's largest oil company; has produced oil and gas equivalent of more than 6 million metric tons last year. Kyrgyzstan's gross domestic product (GDP) has increased by 2.3 percent in 2009. Meanwhile Kyrgyzstan's international reserve also grew by \$0.3 billion in 2009. Last year inflation remained at 5% in Tajikistan. Turkmen gas supplies to Russia since their resumption in January 2010 total 30 million cubic meters a day.

INDIA

Political Front:

National level:

BJP & Leftist Parties have strongly condemned Congress for its inability to control inflation particularly upon food items. As far as insurgencies are concerned; government has decided to launch developmental programs in the effected areas in order to win sympathy of common public. Respective states however have asked government to increase number of troops to counter insurgents. At Kashmiri front clashes between the freedom fighters and security forces have been observed.

Regional Front:

Amar Singh's resignation has caused leadership crisis in Samajwadi Party. Meanwhile Telangana protestors have disrupted the law & order situation of Andhra Pradesh.

Geo-strategic Front:

Indian chief of the army staff Deepak Kapoor's statement that Indian army has the ability to launch two front wars against Pakistan and China created problems for India and now Indian defense ministry and foreign office have been trying to retreat from army chief's stance by saying India wants peace with its neighbors and has no extra territorial ambitions. Indian detainee Ajmal Kasab has again denied his involvement in the incident of 26/11. Besides all that India has recently signed two pacts of cooperation with Botswana.

Social Front:

Swine flu death toll has reached 1113 in India.

Economic Front:

After striving hard against global economic turmoil, Indian industries have started recovering. Meanwhile economists expect increase in GDP this year.

CHINA

Political Front:

Senior Chinese leader has encouraged judges and judicial workers to improve their work at grass-roots levels in a bid to ensure social justice and the people's legal rights.

Geo-strategic Front:

Chinese growing ties with East Asian countries, Japan and Austria grabbed attention. China has provided Pakistan with security scanners. Meanwhile UN has appreciated China for its assistance of earthquake victims of Haiti. Lastly, Google controversy has caused strain in US-China relations.

Social Front:

Signs of expansion of the income gap between China's urban and rural residents have emerged amid the official data showing otherwise strong economic growth. Five officials have been removed from their posts and deprived of their Party membership for alleged corruption after a probe into a landslide that killed 277 people.

Economic Front:

Google has postponed the launch of two mobile phones produced specifically for the Chinese market. China's economy expanded 8.7 percent in 2009 from a year earlier, exceeding the government's annual growth target of 8 percent. China posted a drastic increase in fixed-asset investment in 2009 as the world's third largest economy aimed to spend more on property, roads and other infrastructures to sustain the economic growth. China's industrial added value also rose 11 percent in 2009 from a year earlier. Meanwhile China's exports in 2009 stood at 1.2 trillion U.S. dollars, down 16 percent from 2008, and imports reached 1.01 trillion U.S. dollars, down 11.2 percent from a year earlier. More than 11 million jobs have also been created.