

**Report 116**  
**PROJECT ON BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE**  
**MUSLIM WORLD**

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This is the summary of the whole Euro-America zone (zone 3) taking into account the political, economic, socio-cultural and geo-strategic issues around North America/Canada, Western Europe, Latin America/Southern Europe, Southeast Europe, Oceania, Russia and its Neighbour and East/Central Europe.

### **USA/Canada**

#### Political Issue

Senate Republicans and Democrats predicted on Wednesday that Congress would soon pass a far-reaching overhaul of the nation's financial regulatory system, indicating a potentially swift resolution of the latest partisan firestorm on Capitol Hill.

If four (4) in five (5) Americans do not trust Washington, this is obviously ominous for the democrat-led government as political parties struggle for seats in forthcoming midterm elections. This is also more troublesome with the growing public resentment of the tea party conservatives.

#### Economic Issue

Having understood that the war against financial irresponsibility and repetition of another financial crisis cannot be won just by lashing the Wall Street institutions, President Obama this week rather called on the financial institutions to join him in putting American economy back to its place.

The fear of falling into the bracket of the poor and homelessness continues to haunt many Americans that have lost their jobs in recent times. Meanwhile, the government claims facility is in place to aid such people, while at the same time the ever growing conservative tea party says they are not interested in big government that will meddle in their economic affairs. The question is which way to go; this of course explains why the American political and economic sphere is now punctuated by two types of tea party groups, one against government interference and other supportive of government initiative.

#### Social/Humanitarian Issue

Post 9/11 has not been that good for American Muslims facing varieties of discrimination, public insult and sometimes religious blasphemy. More recently, Abdus Sattar Ghazali, the Executive Editor of the online magazine American Muslim

Perspective called attention of Muslims to the 10-book series - entitled the "World of Islam," published by Mason Crest Publishing in collaboration with the Philadelphia-based pro-Israel and pro-war Foreign Policy Research Institute. The book is said to be an epitome of untrue information, embellished with anti-Islamic sentiments, portraying Muslims as inherently violent and deserving suspicion.

A cartoon comedy (South Park) in the United States recently made a blasphemous depiction of Prophet Muhammad and that has caused roar among American Muslims. RevolutionMuslim group threw in a confrontational response to South Park warning the producers of similar fate faced by the Dutch film maker Mr. Van Gogh. Meanwhile, Ihsan Bagby, general secretary of the Muslim Alliance in North America urges Muslims to rather employ responsible civil mechanism of expressing grievances.

As American Muslims face the heat of discrimination and profiling, CAIR, America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization deemed it fit to finding solutions to the situation. CAIR representatives across the United States thus met with lawmakers at Capitol Hill to discuss issues such as racial profiling, immigration reform and housing foreclosures. They asked the lawmakers to re-introduce and pass the End Racial Profiling Act and to reject racial profiling because it is an ineffective law enforcement tool.

Similarly, CAIR has also lodged complaint to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) to investigate a report of anti-Islam bias in the training offered to security personnel by that military law enforcement agency.

The offensive against American Muslims is not limited to ordinary citizens but also visible among public officers. U.S lawmakers have been quite noticeable making outrageous views of Islam and Muslim and believe Americans having friendship with Muslims are anti-Jews and Christian. Rep. Robin Hayes and Rep. Sue Myrick are in the roll of lawmakers projecting such view; they are linked with fundamentalist Christian groups such as the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS).

Nonetheless, it does not suggest that all America is totally against its Muslim citizens. Abdullah Antepli, a first full-time Muslim chaplain from Duke University was invited to give the 10 a.m. prayer by Rep. David Price, a Democrat from Chapel Hill.

Gov. Jan Brewer of Arizona signed immigration law that has brewed lots of resentment and support. Both critics and supporters of the law say it is the strictest and broadest law America has seen in recent times. President Obama was also concerned about the law as the law allows police to arrest and detain person who might have forgotten his immigration document or appears as illegal immigrant. Hispanics community has taken offence to the law as being directed at them.

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

Geostrategic Issues

The recent memo on Iran released by Defense Secretary Robert Gate came just a week after the nuclear summit hosted by President Obama which Iran was not part of. The memo clearly criticizes the American government of not having concrete response to halt Iran from acquiring nuclear weapon. Gate was of the view that military response is not out of question and that might be indicative for Iranians recently indulging in war game in the Persia gulf as communication that Iran is ready for the worst. .

The Obama administration is expected to invite the Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas to Washington for talks which will be geared at re-opening the stalled Middle East peace talk of 2008. It is unknown if Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu will also be invited as US-Israel relations is currently strained.

With the move towards reducing the number of WMD around the world, American leaderships believe there should be less emphasis on the use of nuclear weapons but more emphasis on developing weapon of tactical accuracy that can hit target any where in the world. This of course will be another cause of concern for Russia and might also further trigger the desire for protective shield by countries accused of harbouring WMD.

Signal of withdrawing American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan in the near future is indicative that U.S is coming to terms that American tax payers' money should not be unnecessarily expending abroad. That is much imperative as the American economy is yet to reassert its stamina.

## **Western Europe**

### Political Issue

Veiled Muslim women are facing challenge across Europe because of their attire seen in France as symbol of suppression and elsewhere in Europe as source of insecurity. Such characterization of European Muslim women did not stop the non-veiled Muslim from expressing their civic responsibility. It is election time in Britain and Muslim women are not sitting back watching men do all the politics rather seeking equal representation. There has been numbers of Muslim women making headline, exerting their political muscles. However, these women are either being supported by their constituency for supporting Islamic values or against for being too liberal.

### Economic Issue

After weeks of airline traveling restriction imposed across Europe as a result of Iceland volcanic eruption, things are now becoming normal. Travellers across the world wanting to travel to and outside Europe were waylaid by the ash cloud crisis. It was momentous for Europe as it has never been witnessed.

Greece financial problem is yet to be off from the attention of members of the Eurozone. The financial trouble is becoming an exigent situation, thus reluctant Germany

is preparing to aid the Greece economy. Similarly the role of IMF in the whole saga is another serious issue.

#### Social/Humanitarian Issue

Even before the government gets it way to ban the veil, a French police fined a veiled Muslim woman (\$29) on the premise that as a driver she needed sufficient field of vision, which her veil will hindered. However, her lawyer is contesting the fine on the ground that if the veil could be fined then motorcycle helmet is no exemption.

Meanwhile, as Belgium drives along to be the first European country to ban the full veil from public sphere, a senior Western Europe researcher at Human Rights Watch, Judith Sunderland criticizes the move by the Belgium parliament to outlaw veil in the public. According to her it will simply lead to a lose-lose situations, as it violates the right of those who chooses to wear the veil.

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

#### Geostrategic Issues

### **Latin America**

#### Political Issue

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera has announced an estimate of \$8.43 billion for the reconstruction of the country after the country was hit by earthquake in February. The reconstruction plan includes providing houses for the houseless and bailing out the economy. However, the plan is hoped to be achieved by increasing tax and government withdrawal from the country's copper savings. Chile is the world's largest wine producer and exporter but the earthquake had a major setback to wine industry.

Venezuelans last week celebrated 200 years independence from Spain, an event President Higo Chavez took advantage of in eulogizing the failed military coup against his new 20 century socialism.

During the ninth ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Americas) summit, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez reiterated his opposition to the presence of U.S military in neighbouring Colombia. According to him it is another form of imperial extension and signaling that Colombia could be used to launch attack on Venezuela. Such rhetoric further heightens the animosity between Colombia and Venezuela after eight Colombians were apprehended in Venezuela for espionage.

#### Economic Issue

Trouble between the Argentine government and the country's commercial community is once again making headline as butchers union are against government new price increase. They are agitating against the rule as it has layoff many workers.

Despite the rhetorical socialism and criticism of his policies, Hugo Chavez made a surprising oil exploration policy. The policy offers foreign oil companies from China, Russia, Japan, Europe and arch enemy United States to explore the large Venezuelan oil reserves.

Like others in the region, Venezuela has also extended its economic tentacles to Southeast Asia. Caracas and Malaysia have entered into series of agreements that will foster economic ties between the two countries. Meanwhile, IMF reports that Venezuela's economy will contracted this year as compare to the other South American countries. The economic contraction owes to the electricity shortage in the country.

#### Social/Humanitarian Issue

Argentina has showed its region and the world that past dictators cannot go unpunished. Mr. Bignone, the last military ruler of the country between 1976 and 1983 was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment.

Chile's Catholic Church has apologized to the families of the victims of child abuse; Chile a Catholic country was one of the countries affected by what the Vatican called shameful acts.

Mexican drug issue remains worrisome not just for the country but also for the neighbouring United States. Senates in the U.S are urging the president to hasten the plan of building fence between the two countries that will reduce the mobility of drug traffickers into the U.S

Venezuela has been noted in the region for having the highest rate of crime. An expert during a TV show made the crime rate comparison. Accordingly, he said Venezuela witnessed 52 homicides, Colombia 34 and Mexico 8 homicides per 100,000 peoples. The authenticity of the claim is questionable owing to the rate of drug violence in Mexico and Colombia

#### Food, Environment and Energy Issue

#### Geostrategic Issues

Argentina during the last week extended her tentacles across the globe by entering into different bilateral ties with countries around the globe. Russia Dimitri Medvadev visit to Argentina was the first of its kind since the last 125 years; the visit broadened their relations and saw agreements in various fields as in space and nuclear technology. China, Vietnam and Qatar were not left out from the bilateral ties boosting.

Pakistan is not the only country struggling to solve its energy crisis, but solving that problem is now a concern for friendly country like Brazil, prepared to facilitate Pakistan with ethanol energy and ready to go into partnership in various other sectors. This enthusiasm was showed when delegates of the Brazilian embassy visited the Multan Chambers of Commerce.

The just concluded BRIC summit held in Brazil had many issues for discussion. The summit concluded with the assertion that global power structure should be

restructured; the global financial institutions have to consider the emerging economies. Meanwhile, BRIC members agreed to multilaterally foster relations among themselves in all sectors including seeking solution to global warming.

## **Southeast Europe**

Political Issue

Economic Issue

Social/Humanitarian Issue

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

Geostrategic Issues

## **Russia and Its Neighbours**

Political Issue

Pulling out Russian troops from Chechnya is a political strategy after Russia witnessed series of attacks from its republics in recent times. The question is would such troop withdrawal relax the tension in the republic.

Since the tragic plane crash that killed numbers of Polish leaders, the country is still nursing the lost, however that does not mean cease political doings. Polish politicians are mulling to decide who will govern the country after the proposed June election. The question is who and which party will accrue the largest sympathy votes.

The speaker of the Czech Republic's lower house of Parliament has resigned and said he will not compete in next month's general election. Social Democrat Miloslav Vlcek who gave up his parliamentary seat after admitting he had violated Czech law by repaying in a single cash installment a loan of 1.1 million koruna (\$58,000) he had received from a former assistant.

Czech Republic President Vaclav Klaus lambasted EU leaders for their non-attendance during Polish leaders' funeral, ascribing the incident to the emptiness of EU solidarity.

Hungarian opposition Fidesz party celebrates her victory in the recent election. The party is promising the nation of economic recovery, job creation and also planning to reduce the number of politicians in the country. The election has not been that good for far-right Jobbik party known for anti-Semitic and anti-gypsy rhetoric.

Latvia's right-wing government has slashed public-sector pay by an average of 31 per cent over the past two years in a bid to satisfy international financiers. The average salary for a ministerial worker plummeted from 1,136 lats (£1,392) in February 2008 to 786 lats (£963) in February 2008.

Kyrgyzstan's interim leader Roza Otunbayeva has condemned Belarus' decision to take in ousted Kyrgyz president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, warning that Bishkek would appeal to Interpol if he is not extradited.

## Economic Issue

Russia has agreed to cut gas price charges for Ukraine by 30 percent, saving the former Soviet republic about \$40 billion over the next decade. At the same time, Ukraine extended Russia's lease on the Crimean port of Sevastopol, home to the Black Sea Fleet, until 2042.

Ukraine hopes to secure a new \$12 billion lending programme from the International Monetary Fund for the next 30 months. The IMF had released around \$11 billion of a \$16.4 billion programme to Ukraine before freezing lending in late 2009 after large spending increases were passed into law

Russia being an integral of BRIC undoubtedly adds more grease to Kremlin's elbow. Analysts are saying it is no more sensation that the BRIC's economies will challenged and perhaps outshone the developed world's economies.

Russia is once again reiterating her desire for the WTO, as a high-level Russian delegation negotiates Russian accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) with U.S.

Global consumer food producer, Nestle is facing problem in Russia. The company is yet to receive any official documents from the consumer protection.

Poland's economic growth will reach 2.7 percent this year and will accelerate to 3.2 percent in 2011, according to a new forecast by the International Monetary Fund. The report says the Polish economy is doing "relatively well during the global economic crisis."

President of the Poland-Nigeria Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chief Julius Ogunyemi has urged the Nigeria Federal Government to consider Poland's initiative of revamping the nation's power and steel sectors. The late Polish president was considering the deployment of Polish technology towards the revamping of Nigeria's railway system.

Slovakia Finance Minister Jan Pociatek said the country will cut its fiscal deficit to 5.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) as planned this year despite overshooting its past year's target.

Similarly, monthly Reuter's poll has shown that Hungary's central bank (NBH) is expected to cut interest rates by another 25 basis points.

Like Greece, Latvia the small Baltic country is also facing serious economic crisis. Sweden is more likely to lend Latvia 720 million euros (\$970 million) within

weeks as part of its contribution to the Baltic nation's international bailout. Latvia turned to the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and neighboring Nordic states for a 7.5 billion-Euro loan at the end of 2008 after taking over its second biggest bank as the credit crisis deepened.

Lithuanian Finance Minister Ingrida Simonyte said the 2014 would be a "natural date" for her country to adopt the Euro as the Baltic state is expected to cut its budget deficit to less than 3% of gross domestic product by 2012.

#### Social/Humanitarian Issue

Allegation that Russia is complicit in the Polish plane crash that killed tens of Polish leaders is making headlines. Russia is maintaining innocence and believes the accident was due to authority clash than the Russian conspiracy attached to it.

Chechens are not comfortable with the negative stereotype and writing against their community. This stereotype affects the republic. Chechnya's Human Rights Ombudsman Nurdi Nukhazhiev claims that there are other writings that are anti-prejudices and better portraying Chechnya and that should be considered.

CISCO and NEXTIRA ONE has announced that they have completed a major deployment to extend and support the Polish Border Guard's information technology and communications platform.

The Czech Republic will bring "the best of its culture" to China with the Czech cultural festival starting next month. The two-month festival will feature Czech's two strengths: ballet and sculpture. The exhibition entitled "New Sensitivity" centers on the glass sculpture of the 1960s-1980s which gave rise to a new artistic sphere

The Stockholm city authorities have asked diplomats from Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Poland for cooperation in solving the problem of immigrant beggars in the city. The beggars are immigrants from the newly EU members.

While Washington plans to pump unprecedented sums into what critics call a government takeover of health care, Moscow is moving in the opposite direction by backing legislation that could force hospitals and other public institutions to go commercial or close.

#### Food, Environment and Energy Issue

#### Geostrategic Issues

Russia is renewing its policy of 'do our bid and shall be well with you', this policy is very much clear in the new Russia-Ukraine relations. Russia is giving economic concession and Ukraine in return is allowing Russia to stay on its shore for more decades. US Secretary of State Clinton reacted that such new Russia-Ukraine ties should be seen

as an attempt to balance his country's foreign policy, not a step away from the West toward Russia.

Even though Russia might have attended the just concluded Iranian organised nuclear summit, Kremlin appears resentful of the conference's statement because the document was not discussed by the event's participants and it was not submitted for approval by delegates. Russia forth and back position on Iranian nuclear issue is most worrisome for Tehran as Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov highlighted that sanctions against Iran have become unavoidable because of Tehran's unwillingness to comply with the international community.

Meanwhile, Russia extends its energy agreement and tentacles to Bulgaria, wherefrom gas will be transported to Italy and Austria.

NATO during its just concluded meeting urges Russia to throw the Cold War behind and should rather seek peaceful co-existence with neighbours. Georgia has accused Russia of nuclear negligence as Georgian officials claimed to have apprehended highly enriched uranium from smugglers.

Russia and U.S have agreed on reduction of nuclear warheads as part of the reactivation of the NPT regime. But that does not shake off the suspicion of Russia for America, in view of the latter new plan to explore intercontinental tactical weapon. Russian authority founds the new plan offensive.

Russia has always been sensitive to Europeans and American's actions and that does not exempt the plan by the Americans to have Patriot anti-aircraft and anti- missile systems in Poland. Deploying such system in the region irritates Russians' sensitivity

The Russia-Venezuela military relations which somewhat raises question is more likely to be exacerbated as Peru is also seeking to buy military helicopters from Russia geared at fighting narcotics production and trade.

## **Oceania**

Political Issue

Economic Issue

Social/Humanitarian Issue

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

Geostrategic Issues