



ASIA
MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA; WEST ASIA; SOUTH ASIA; NORTH ASIA; EAST ASIA



AFRICA
WEST AFRICA; EAST AFRICA & HORN OF AFRICA; CENTRAL AFRICA; SOUTH AFRICA



EUROAMERICA
WEST EUROPE; EAST EUROPE; NORTH AMERICA; LATIN AMERICA



GLOBALIZED OPINION...



GLOBALIZED FINANCE...



GLOBALIZED ELECTIONS...

Friday on the facebook

WEEKLY NEWS MONITOR OF OPINIONS & EVENTS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Based on weekly reports produced by the project 'Globalized Business & Politics: a View from the Muslim World.'

Using a rich data-base of news reports and opinion polls from all over the world we analyze and compile papers on global trends and patterns in the sphere of economics, politics and society. These reports and analytical summaries are uploaded online for discussion and are accessible on the [BPM Blog Page](#).

WELCOME REMARKS for new readers What is FOF?

Dear Colleagues,

We are mailing to you the weekly e-letter of the project: Globalized Business and Politics: A View from the Muslim World". The e-letter is a snapshot of the detailed data gathering and analysis which our research team does each week.

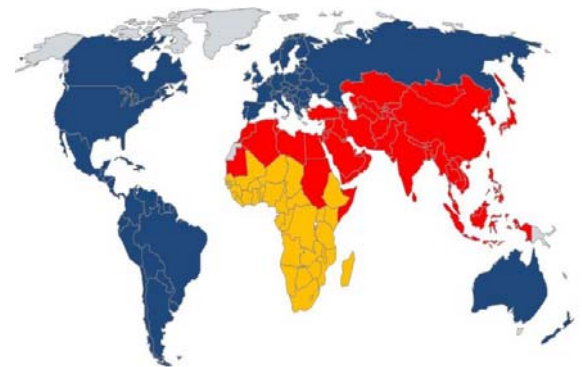
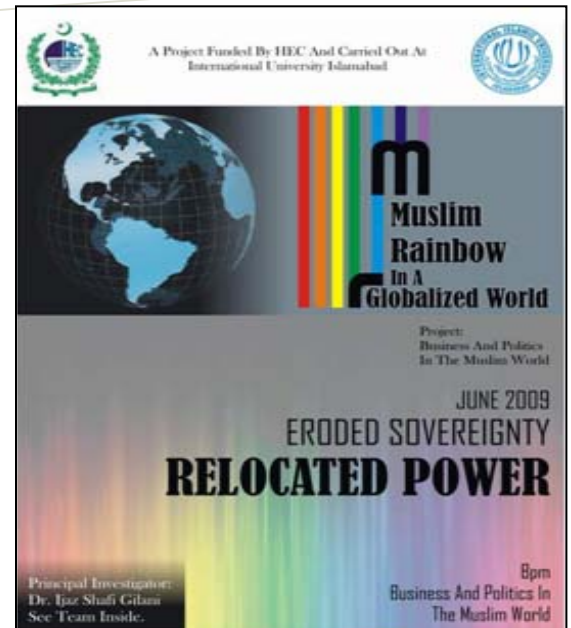
Why should one add another e-letter to many similar exercises already underway? We have pondered this question and here is what we believe to be our possible contribution or *Competitive Advantage*.

- ◆ We will make the e-letter a multi-layered presentation: in other words Friday on the Facebook will provide clicks to deeper levels of information; for comprehension (Maps and Data) as well as for elaboration

and analysis (complete weekly Events data, supplementary commentaries and related links).

- ◆ Our weekly e-letter will be grounded in a thorough Analytical framework of Relocation of Power in the 21st Century.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter will be targeted to produce an annual synthesis of Global Trends. Each issue will serve as an input for the annual analysis.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter will be designed to become a teaching tool for class-room instruction in courses dealing with global political sociology or related fields.
- ◆ Our weekly e-letter will also be designed to build a theoretically inclined community of political sociologists.

With best wishes and prayers we present our 'pilot weekly e-letter: *Friday on the Facebook. - A Weekly Monitor of Global Opinions and Events.* §



Business and Politics in the Muslim World (BPM) refers to a study funded by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, and is conducted at the International Islamic University (IIU), Islamabad.



Globalized Opinions

This week's report consists of **22** national surveys.

Week # 113
Dated 28 March – 3 April, 2010
Gallopedia Highlights

ASIA zone- 2 single country polls covering:
Middle East & North Africa- Israel
West Asia- Turkey

AFRICA zone- 1 single country poll covering:
Southern Africa- South Africa

EURO-AMERICAS zone-19 single country polls:
East Europe- Russia, Ukraine
West Europe- UK, Germany
North America- U.S.A, Canada
Latin America- Brazil

Subjects covered include:

Politics and Elections
Political economy
Governance
Sovereignty and Nationalism
Social issues/ Health and Disease



With a new Government in place, Ukraine's NATO ambitions seem to have thawed

Is Ukrainian 'No' to NATO, Part of Russian Resurgence?

Ukraine has pursued a policy to be part of NATO for six years but the current government of Viktor Yanukovich decided to take a U-turn. **Ukrainian** parliament is going to pass a law that will restrict the nation from joining the military alliance. This government decision also seems to enjoy popular support. A *Pew Research Center* survey shows that more than half of the **Ukrainian** respondents have an unfavorable opinion of **NATO** and they are opposed to their nation's entry into the force.¹ This opposition is highest in ethnically *Russian* areas of **Ukraine**. Somewhat similar are the views about **NATO** in **Belarus**, another neighbor of **Ukraine** and **Russia**.

The surveys show that **Ukrainians** have a very positive opinion of **Russia**. It seems that all immediate neighbors of Russia with the exception of Georgia entertain a favorable inclination towards it, considering its influence positive. The opinions on the Central Asian side are somewhat mixed.

Keeping in view the fact of stabilizing **Russian** economy and military strength reflected in its foreign policy, *Russian* resurgence seems to be underway. Will Russia be able to extend its positive image beyond these immediate neighbors in East Europe? Are Russians still thinking of a Greater Russia including integrating some parts of Soviet Union back to its territory? Public support for *United Russia* has been on the rise for the last few years but can it really be translated into *political ambitions*?

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Zone 1- ASIA

CENTRAL ASIA

Turks Endorse Idea of Civilian Constitution

Most people in Turkey think the country needs to enact a civilian constitution, according to a poll by Pollmark. 58 per cent of respondents share this opinion, while 20 per cent oppose the notion.

March 30, 2010

MIDDLE EAST

Kadima Takes First Place Among Israeli Voters

Israel's opposition Kadima party is ahead of the governing Likud, according to a poll by the Dahaf Institute published in *Yediot Ahronot*. A prospective tally of seats shows that Kadima would secure 32 seats in the Knesset, followed by Likud with 29.

March 30, 2010

Zone 2- AFRICA

SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

Race relations on the improve in South Africa

Ipsos found that the majority of South Africans recently polled felt that relationships between the various race groups in South Africa are improving. This trend has continuously improved over the last few years and that the percentage of South Africans with a positive feeling far outweighs the prophets of gloom on this topic.

March 20, 2010

Zone 3- EURO-AMERICAS

EAST EUROPE

Ukraine Says 'No' to NATO

Pew found that half of Ukrainians (51%) opposed their country's admission to NATO, while only 28% favored such a step. Moreover, given the opposition to membership, it is not surprising that about half of Ukrainians (51%) gave NATO an unfavorable rating.

March 29, 2010

Russians Don't Want Closer Ties with U.S.

Few people in Russia want their country to seek improved relations with the United States, according to a poll by the Yury Levada Analytical Center. Only 14 per cent of respondents advocate for closer bi-lateral ties, down 10 points since March 2003.

April 01, 2010

WEST EUROPE

Germans Reject Monetary Aid to Greece

Over two thirds of people in Germany oppose a plan to give monetary aid to Greece, according to a poll by Forsa released by *Stern*. 68 per cent of respondents reject the notion of Germany providing Greece with financial assistance.

April 03, 2010

Tories No Longer Lead by Double-Digits in Britain



The opposition Conservative Party remains ahead of its rivals in Britain, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 37 per cent of respondents would support the Tories in this year's election to the House of Commons.

April 02, 2010

NORTH AMERICA

Most Americans Worried About Economic Conditions

Many adults in the United States remain concerned about the country's financial standing, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 81 per

cent of respondents rate the economic conditions in the U.S. as poor or very poor.

March 30, 2010

Chronic Conditions Linked to Cancer

Americans who report having been diagnosed with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes are roughly twice as likely to report a cancer diagnosis as those who have not been diagnosed with these conditions, according to Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index data.

April 1, 2010

Blame Spread Around for Post-Healthcare Vandalism, Threats

Americans hold all sides of the healthcare reform battle responsible for the rash of threatening e-mails, phone calls, and vandalism that erupted last week after the healthcare bill passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. Roughly half (49%) say controversial political maneuvers by Democratic leaders to secure the votes they needed were a major reason. Nearly as many blame harsh criticism of the bill by both conservative media commentators and Republican leaders.

March 30, 2010

Pope Benedict Favorable Rating Drops to 40% in U.S.

A new low of 40% of Americans view Pope Benedict XVI favorably amid new criticism about the Roman Catholic Church's handling of child sex abuse by priests. Now, nearly as many Americans have an unfavorable view of the pope as have a favorable view.

March 31, 2010

Republicans Move Ahead in 2010 Vote for Congress

Registered voters now say they prefer the Republican to the Democratic candidate in their district by 47% to 44% in the midterm congressional elections, the first time the GOP has led in 2010 election preferences since Gallup began weekly tracking of these in March.

April 1, 2010

Most Canadians Support Quebec's Veil Ban

People in Canada agree with Quebec's proposal to instruct people to show their faces in order to receive government services, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 80 per cent of respondents approve of this legislation.

March 29, 2010

Canadians Oppose Afghan Combat Beyond 2011

People in Canada reject the possibility of extending the country's military commitment in Afghanistan beyond the current timetable, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 79 per cent of respondents oppose Canadian troops taking part in a combat mission after 2011.

April 03, 2010



Most Canadians Pleased with Economic Conditions

A majority of people in Canada believe the country's financial standing is satisfactory, according to a poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion. 54 per cent of respondents rate the economic conditions in Canada today as good or very good, up two points since February.

April 01, 2010

LATIN AMERICA

Brazilians Just Enamoured with Lula

With a presidential election in the horizon for Brazil, the popularity of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva keeps growing, according to a poll by Datafolha published in *Folha de Sao Paulo*. 76 per cent of respondents say Lula's presidency has been good or very good, up four points since February.

April 03, 2010

Brazil's Rousseff is Becoming a Stronger Contender

The first round of the next presidential election in Brazil could be a tight contest, according to a poll by Ibope. 35 per cent of respondents would vote for Jose Serra of the Brazilian Party of Social Democracy (PSDB), while 30 per cent would support Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party (PT).

April 01, 2010

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TURKEY

Political Front: Ruling party AKP has sent amendments draft to parliament for voting proposing 26 amendments in the constitution. The ruling party needs support of 330 deputies to get the resolution passed in favor of constitutional amendments. Though the party has 336 members, some are expected to oppose the bill. In the meantime the PM has also claimed that in case of parliament's rejection, the amendment package will be taken to the public for a referendum. On the other hand two leading opposition parties namely CHP and MHP have launched an active campaign against the constitutional amendments introduced by the ruling party. An open survey however indicates that most of the people have condemned opposition parties for instantly rejecting amendment package.

An Istanbul court has released nine military officers, including three admirals, who have been charged in an alleged plot to overthrow the government. Besides that **Turkish** counterterrorism teams have detained 22 suspected members of al-Qaeda in simultaneous operations conducted in three provinces namely Aksaray, Manisa and the Şereflikoçhisar district of Ankara.

Geo-strategic Front: **Turkey** has strongly condemned recent terrorist attacks in Moscow. Meanwhile both **Turkey** and **Russia** have discussed cooperation in the field of security.

The *Irish* President's visit to **Turkey** has further boosted their historical ties. Growing *Syrian* cooperation with



Turkey also remained potent. In the meantime **Turkish** President paid visit to **Pakistan** and stressed on the need to enhance collaboration in various sectors.

The *German* Chancellor has expressed her willingness to enhance cooperation with **Turkey** mainly in the energy sector. At the same time Angela Merkel has urged **Turkey** to vote in favor of US and EU at UNSC over the issue of *Iranian* nuclear program. Meanwhile **Turkey** has strongly condemned *France* and *Germany* for supplying arms to *Greece*. **Turkey** has also condemned *Israel* for considering united Jerusalem as their capital.

As far as the **Turkish** bid for EU is concerned *Cyprus* issue has been regarded as quite significant hence its resolution seems to be important for **Turkish** joining of the EU. Lastly, US Secretary of Hillary Clinton has assured **Turkey** that resolution regarding *Armenian* genocide would not be approved in the White House. Besides that a recent survey indicated that only one third of *Armenians* support reconciliation with **Turkey**.

Economic Front: An increase in **China's** scrap iron imports has pushed up prices in **Turkey** from TL 800 per ton to TL 1,300. Exports from **Turkey** dropped 0.8 percent to 16.1 billion USD in the first two months of 2010, whereas imports were up 26.2 percent to 23.1 billion USD. Hence **Turkey's** foreign trade deficit rose 242.4 percent in the first two months of 2010 to 6.9 billion USD.

Smoking ban in **Turkey** has led to a 15 percent drop in cigarette sales since its implementation. **Turkey** has refused to sign deal with IMF over some political issues.

Social Front: A head scarved woman was recently denied entry to a toy museum in Ankara.

The number Face book users in **Turkey** has crossed 20mln. Besides that heavy snowfall in Eastern provinces of **Turkey**, various arrests over the issue of match-fixing and growing number of suicides in **Turkey** remained important issues.

GCC

Political Front: **Kuwait's** government has condemned statements that it had struck deals with some lawmakers to support the information minister in a no-confidence vote.

Geo-strategic Front: **Yemen** has asked its neighboring Gulf countries to provide jobs to skilled and semi-skilled **Yemenis** along with the regular aid and assistance.

Pakistan has welcomed **Saudi** mediation for the restoration of meaningful composite dialogue with *India*. All the while *Saudi* King has recently called for dialogue among religions. **Bahrain** and *Thailand* have agreed to bolster their cooperation on food security, Islamic finance, education, culture and construction. In the meantime **Bahrain**

has contributed \$1 million to recovery efforts in *Haiti*.

Oman has expressed interest in buying Aircrafts from UK.

Economic Front: **Yemeni** imports from *Pakistan* have reached USD 200 million during the past year.

Saudi stocks last week rose to its highest point since 2008. meanwhile the government of **Saudi Arabia** has decided to pay the difference of the customs fees applied under the Gulf Cooperation Council unified customs tariff on 180 major food items and construction materials to help curb inflation in the Kingdom that reportedly surged to a 27-year high of 8.7% in February.

Qatar has offered to invest \$1 billion (Dh3.67 billion) in *France's* heavily indebted CMA CGM, the world's third-biggest shipping group.

Social Front: Around 30 prisoners escaped after a bomb explosion at a prison in southern **Yemen**.

Meanwhile two men and two women were killed in a car accident after allegedly being chased by the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Al-Khalil area in Medina.

The number of *Nepali* laborers in **Saudi Arabia** has been growing. **Kuwait's** information ministry has pledged a zero-tolerance policy towards satellite channels that broadcast programs that could "erode national unity or undermine social cohesion. Meanwhile **Kuwaiti** media criticized the participation of three **Kuwaiti** athletes in an international track meet where *Israelis* also participated.

Oman has imposed fines against people smoking in public gatherings.

IRAN

Political Front: Strain between **Iranian** President and his opponent and former President Rafsanjani has been quite

visible since **Iranian** elections of 2009. All the while the stance of Supreme leader in this regard, seems to be quite vague. The **Iranian** judiciary has claimed that the post election situation has made the country more strong as people have successfully fought against anti-Republic plots. Meanwhile reports have indicated that one of the **Iranian** nuclear scientists who disappeared after performing Hajj last year, has been found in USA working for CIA.

Geo-strategic Front: *Tehran* has rejected a statement by the Arab League repeating the **UAE** ownership claims over the three **Iranian** islands in the Persian Gulf. President Mahmud Ahmedinejad has suggested that a woman be appointed as the deputy to the head of OIC. *Russia* has reiterated its stance regarding **Iranian** nuclear program and has called negotiations to be the only appropriate way to resolve the issue.

Economic Front: **Iranian** Vice President said that his country has witnessed 8% growth in industry in one year. **Iran's** Guardian Council has approved the budget for the next Iranian year which allows the **Iranian** president to go ahead with his plan to cut costly state subsidies.

Iran and *Bahrain* have discussed ways to promote cooperation in oil and gas sectors. Meanwhile **Iran** Agricultural Jihad Ministry and *Japan* International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed an agreement last week to implement two new projects in **Iran**.

Social Front: **Iran's** Navy has sent 7th vessel to the *Gulf of Aden* to fight pirates and protect the country's shipping lines.

In a letter to Foreign Minister **Iranian** students from eight main universities in Tehran urged **Iranian** diplomatic authorities to swiftly cut ties with *Sweden* until *Swedish* officials apologize for republishing a sacrilegious cartoon of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), by one of their newspapers.



CENTRAL ASIA

Political Front: Leaders of **Kazakhstan's** Communist Party and the United Social Democratic Azat (Free) Party have issued a joint statement demanding the release of a jailed activist. Meanwhile several **Kazakh** activists have been detained in Almaty while campaigning for the release of jailed former uranium company head.

The **Kyrgyz** President has declared Western democratic system to be unsuitable for his country.

A new criminal procedure code of **Tajikistan** came into effect last week; that increased power of judicial courts.

Geo-strategic Front: Amidst growing strain between **Azerbaijan** and **Armenia**; a former military leader of the disputed region of *Nagorno-Karabakh* has recently warned of the growing threat of another *Armenian-Azerbaijani war*.

Meanwhile the Deputy Foreign Minister of **Russia** also discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh issue with EU representatives at Brussels. All the while Foreign Ministers of **Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia** also discussed the same issue. Meanwhile Disarmament Program Manager of the US State Department, has recently paid visit to **Azerbaijan** and held meeting with higher officials.

Exchange of fire was observed at the **Uzbek-Kyrgyz** border.

Kyrgyz Parliament has signed MoU with *British* Parliament. Meanwhile the **Tajik** President paid a visit to *Singapore* and *Brunei* in order to enhance ties. Also the UN Secretary General recently arrived in **Turkmenistan** during his visit to the Central Asian Republics. Russian Vice Premier also recently paid a visit to **Uzbekistan**.

Economic Front: *Nabucco* Managing Director has announced its readiness to start pipeline construction in 2011. Meanwhile **Kyrgyzstan** has started taking measures to improve conditions for the business community.

Social Front: **Azerbaijani** officials announced that foreign companies have invested some \$5 million in the construction of a major film complex in Baku. All the while Jailed **Azerbaijani** blogger Emin Milli has been offered a place in a prestigious British fellowship program designed for future leaders.

The German automaker Daimler AG has agreed to pay a \$185 million fine to the U.S. Securities and



Exchange Commission (SEC) over allegations that bribes were paid to secure business in a number of countries, including *Russia, Turkmenistan, Romania, Bulgaria, and Latvia*.

Kazakh journalists have urged authorities to explain their criteria for defining "destructive" websites. Meanwhile on March 25, 2010 the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee (Committee) adopted its final observations and recommendations after considering third periodic report of **Uzbek** government.

SOUTH ASIA

Political Front: **Bangladeshi** Prime Minister has directed the ministries and other departments to implement quota facilities for the disabled persons in government services. BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition has decided to launch anti-government agitation programs by May after completing her ongoing political tours in the divisional headquarters.

Nepali PM denied rumors regarding his resignation and blamed Maoists for their non-seriousness regarding the ongoing political crisis in the country. Meanwhile former **Nepali** Foreign Minister blamed **India** and US for their involvement in nine years old palace carnage. Nepali Maoists have demanded Rs. 2 mln for each militia joining politics. Leader of the parliamentary party of the **Nepali** Congress (NC), said that his party would support the Maoist bid to return to power 'if they gave up violence and disbanded the Maoist army'. Along with the issue of integration of Maoists in **Nepali** Army; concerns regarding the issue of federalism and secularism also prevail in the country.

Sri Lankan President has warned his former military commander General from entering into politics. Meanwhile the premier paid his first visit last week to Tamils Heartland after re-election. **Sri Lanka's** main opposition, UNP candidate for the Colombo District and former journalist Susil Kindelpitiya has been arrested

on a complaint lodged by a woman who claimed that she was abused and threatened by him.

Sri Lanka's Democratic National Alliance (DNA) has initiated discussions on an "unofficial" level with other opposition parties over the possibility of forming a national reconciliation government after the April 8 general election. A team of sixteen observers from *Japan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Afghanistan and Thailand* representing Asian Network for Free Election would monitor **Srilankan** elections on a request made by the election watchdog.



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Geo-strategic Front: **India** has proposed to **Bangladesh** the setting up of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in a joint venture (JV). **Bhutanese** PM held bilateral discussions with his **Nepali** counterpart while visiting the country. Among various issues they also focused on the critical issue of **Bhutanese** refugees. **India** has provided an assistance of Rs 11.1 million for constructing a new school building and another Rs 2.19 million for a primary health centre in **Nepal**. All the while British Department of International Development (DFID) funded **Nepal** with 961,822 Euro (some US\$1.5

million) for procuring voter registration equipment. **Sri Lanka** has questioned the double standards of the United Nations by attempting to set up an expert panel on **Sri Lanka** within nine months whereas it took nine years for the organization to set up a probe commission to investigate *Britain's* involvement in **Iraq**.

Srilanka has requested **India** to help her in construction of a 500 MW coal-based power plant.

Economic Front: Economist claimed that an unusual hike in land prices, the culture of default loan with banks and massive tax evasion has widened the rich-poor gap in **Bangladesh**.

Bangladesh has expressed readiness to give duty free access to 18 **Bhutanese** products. International donors mainly; *Japan, US, EU* and *IMF*, have pledged 313 million dollars in aid to the **Maldives** to help its recovery from last year's financial crisis. Despite identification and diagnosis of growth constraints and availability of required financing, political deadlock has stalled the implementation of poverty, health, and environment-related development programs in **Nepal**. **Sri Lanka's** economy expanded at the fastest pace in five quarters as the government stepped up spending on new roads and ports after the end of a quarter-century of civil war in the country.

Social Front: **Bangladesh** has lifted a ban on a photo exhibition on extrajudicial killings linked to security forces following protests from local and international rights groups. Farmers, women and students staged weekend protests against power cuts disrupting industry and households in **Bangladesh**. Government blamed its predecessors for power shortage and claimed that it would take time to meet energy needs. All the while government has barred use of air conditioners from 6 pm to 11 pm daily until further notice for all residences, private and public offices, businesses and shops. An international rights group has accused **Bangladesh** of 'violating human rights' in its crackdown on the unregistered refugees mainly Rohingyas Muslims.



All **South Asian** countries observed *Global Earth Hour* last week in order to extend support to the WWF climate change campaign.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has accused **Nepalese** Army for using excessive force that caused death of two women and a 12-year old girl inside Badriya National Park last month. Meanwhile the wife of **Sri Lanka's** detained ex-army chief accused authorities of preventing her husband from receiving vital medical treatment and said he could die in custody.

INDIA

Political Front: Strain has further exacerbated between Congress and BJP because of Congress' criticism on BJP's involvement in 2002 Gujarat massacre and Modi's hesitation to face Special Investigation team. As far as Maoist insurgency is concerned Home Minister P Chidambaram has said India would be able to counter the Maoist insurgency by 2013.

Geo-strategic Front: India has successfully tested nuclear-capable, ship-based Dhanush and surface-to-surface Prithvi-II.

India and the *United States* have agreed to the arrangement and procedures under which the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel would take place at two stand-alone safeguarded sites. New Delhi also retains the right to make additions and modifications. This would allow **India** to retrieve recyclable material found in spent fuel from U.S.-origin nuclear plants for further generating electricity. The reprocessing plants, however, would operate under

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) procedures. India has been concentrating on its military presence in the northern borders in order to counter *Chinese* perceived threat. The US has warned India and Pakistan to avoid any discussions with *Iran* over the issue of IPI pipeline.

Economic Front: Marked improvement has been observed in **Indian** Stock Exchange. Meanwhile **India's** merchandise exports grew 34.8 percent to \$16.09 billion for the fourth consecutive month in February.

Social Front: Against the backdrop of racial attacks and stricter immigration rules, **Indian** students' enrolment in universities in *Australia's* Victorian state has recorded a massive drop of around 40% in the first two months of the new academic year as compared to the same period in 2009.

To fulfill international requirement **India** has started working on the mechanism to count its population. Meanwhile *Hindu-Muslim* riots in the city of Hyderabad led government to impose curfew over there.

KOREA

Political Front: The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) of **South Korea** urged President to dismiss Defense Minister and Chief of Naval Operations over the sinking of the Cheonan patrol ship near the inter-Korean sea border last week. Defense Minister however claimed that a torpedo could be the cause of sinking of naval ship.

Geo-strategic Front: **North Korea** accused the *United States* and **South Korea** for allowing tourists and journalists into the heavily armed buffer zone that has divided the **Korean** Peninsula. In the meantime USA has again asked **North Korea** to resume six party talks in order to resolve the nuclear issue.

A *U.S.* Navy group of four ships has joined **South Korea's** rescue and recovery operations for its sunken frigate, the Cheonan. **South Korean** President reiterated its claims over islets of Dokdo in East Sea where **Japan** also has claims.

Economic Front: The leaders of five members of the G-20 Steering Group including **South Korea** urged G-20 member nations to carry out the agreements reached at the past meeting in order to reform the global financial regulatory framework and create post-crisis measures. Sinking of **South Korean** naval ship also affected shares of the country negatively. All the while **South Korean** exports increased in March as compared to the last year but fell as compared to February this year.

Social front: The **Korea** Meteorological Administration (KMA) has opened a center for the nation's third climate supercomputer in a move to become the world's sixth most advanced country in weather forecasting by 2012. Involvement of a large number of school teachers and headmasters in corruption poses serious social challenge to **South Korea**. The Ministry of Labor has decided to slash the quota of H-2 working visas for ethnic **Koreans** to zero this year. Chinese and Russians would be the main sufferers.

JAPAN

Political Front: A candidate supporting the Democratic Party of **Japan** has been elected as president of the Japan Medical Association, defeating the incumbent supporting the Liberal Democratic Party. Representatives of the two junior partners in the Democratic Party of **Japan** -led coalition has asked the government to rule out a plan to move U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa; hence the government has started looking for an alternative. Meanwhile discussion over the issue has been held by **Japanese** officials with the US officials. US Defense Secretary has asked **Japanese**

officials to get local consent on an area where Futenma has to be relocated.

Geo-strategic Front: The 2010 *East Asian Strategic Review* by the National Institute for Defense Studies has stressed that the U.S. forces should be permanently forward-deployed in **Japan** in order to enhance strategic partnership between the two. **Japan** and Poland have also signed a memorandum to promote cooperation in the civil use of atomic power.

Economic Front: Confidence at **Japanese** companies has improved for the fourth straight quarter. *Toyota* has promised to respond faster to customer complaints as it held its first meeting of a quality experts committee set up to help salvage a reputation battered by massive recalls and reports of runaway vehicles.

Social Front: **Japan's** first antismoking ordinance took effect in Kanagawa Prefecture, banning smoking in public facilities, including hospitals, schools and government offices. UN has urged **Japan** to avoid racism and protect minorities' rights. §



Futenma air base is surrounded by densely-packed residential areas

POLITICS OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT ISSUES

West Africa: In the first major bi-national agreement with an African country in a long time, the *United States* last week signed a historic comprehensive commission pact with **Nigeria** under which the two countries would be cooperating in four areas i.e. trade and energy; Niger Delta; electoral reform; and peace and security.

Security has been beefed up at the airports in **Nigeria** following last week's incident in which a commercial driver rammed into an Abuja-bound Arik airplane.



The leader of **Guinea's** ruling military junta visited France last week for talks on how to proceed towards a general election, but his ministers were denied visas due to the massacre of opposition supporters in late 2009.

Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior of **Guinea Bissau** was detained last week and later released by soldiers who threatened to kill him if there are any solidarity rallies by his supporters. The military however has denied that it attempted a coup after ousting the army's chief of staff, Admiral Jose Zamora Induta, and briefly detaining the PM.

Meanwhile **UN** Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged the military and political leadership of **Guinea-Bissau** to resolve their differences peacefully and to maintain constitutional order and the rule of law, after the incident. Security sector reform remains the most crucial element to ensuring stability in **Guinea-Bissau**, according to a new United Nations report released today, which calls on the international community to support the country's efforts towards this goal.

Senegal's president said last week that the West African country was reclaiming three *French* military bases to mark its 50th year of independence from France. In Paris, however, officials said the bases' future was still under discussion.

South Africa: Last week a farmers' rights group in **South Africa** seized a residential property in Cape Town belonging to the **Zimbabwe** government. The group, Afriforum said it has taken the **Zimbabwe** government property as part of a "civil sanctions" campaign against President Robert Mugabe's government.

Zimbabwe's President Mugabe has said that he will not swear Bennett (a senior member of the Movement for Democratic Change) into office until courts clear him of all outstanding charges.

Zimbabwe's first human rights and electoral commissions were sworn in by President Robert Mugabe last week. The creation of the two commissions is seen as crucial in moving the country towards free and fair elections.

Meanwhile **Zimbabwe's** political parties last week failed to meet the deadline set by **South African** President Jacob Zuma to resolve a power-sharing dispute that threatens to tear apart the country's coalition.

Central Africa: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has named a veteran United Nations official, Mr. Youssef Mahmoud of *Tunisia*, as his Acting Special Representative for the UN Mission in the **Central African Republic** and **Chad** (MINURCAT). Earlier this month the Security Council extended MINURCAT's mandate through 15 May.

According to a **Rwandan** military spokesperson attacks by the FDLR on the population of the **Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo** have drastically reduced in the past months.



HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

West Africa: **Niger** authorities arrested 618 suspects in raids last week aimed at curbing a crime wave in the capital, Niamey, where residents say serious food shortages and severe poverty have led to a surge in crime.

South Africa: According to reports thousands of construction workers are being laid off in **Angola** because the government has failed to settle over \$2 billion in arrears to foreign firms rebuilding the African nation.

According to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) thousands of people living in the southeastern coast of **Madagascar** will have improved access to clean water when a new project launches in April to assist families affected by Tropical Storm Hubert.

Central Africa: A recent conference organized by the **Congolese** Women's League for Elections in collaboration with the UN aimed at boosting the efforts of women in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC) and overcome decades of low female participation in politics.



Rev. Mary Glasspool as the bishop of Los Angeles

Following the election of Rev. Mary Glasspool as the bishop of *Los Angeles* , Anglican Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini of **Rwanda** has warned that the approval of a second openly homosexual bishop in the U.S. Episcopal Church will further tear apart the 77-million-member worldwide Anglican Communion.

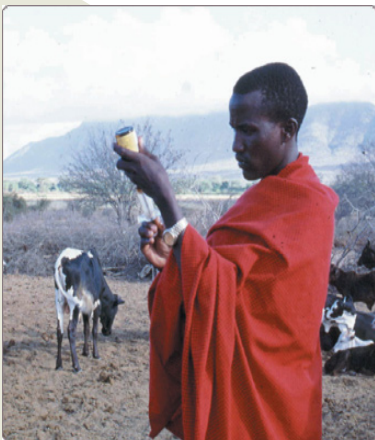
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HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

South Africa: Many houses in the capital of **Zambia** have been submerged due to the heavy rains being experienced compounded with poor drainage system. Lusaka is said to be built on top of a rock making it difficult for water to sink.

Meanwhile extensive flooding along the rivers of central and southern **Mozambique** during March, in tandem with persistent drought in other parts of the same areas, have left 465,000 people in need of food assistance, where aid agencies warn they lack enough resources to help.

According to reports an outbreak of *Rift Valley Fever* (RVF), described as "large" by **South Africa's** National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), has claimed the lives of two people and poses a significant threat to livelihoods in major farming areas.



POLITICAL ECONOMY

South Africa: Shell Oil said last week that it was considering selling most of its service stations and other downstream assets in 21 African countries, as part of a wider effort to reduce its global refining and marketing exposure.

Central Africa: The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved a US\$115.6m from the International Development Association to assist **Rwanda** implement its Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). §

Zone 3- Euro-America: *Transatlantic Community*

WESTERN EUROPE

Voters began casting ballots last week in **Italy's** regional elections, which are being seen as an important test of popularity for Premier Silvio Berlusconi. The premier has seen his popularity erode amid rising unemployment, a corruption scandal and an investigation into his alleged attempts to influence TV coverage. Despite apprehensions Berlusconi's coalition won crucial races and wrested control of four regions

from the opposition.

Former **UK** Prime Minister Tony Blair made a dramatic pre-election return to domestic British politics last week with an attack on the policies of David Cameron a Tory leader. Blair's return, weeks before a national election, came in a speech urging voters to give his Labour Party a fourth term in office.

Senior Catholic bishops are urging **British** worshippers to carefully consider candidates' policies toward marriage and abortion when they vote in the looming national election — a move likely to benefit the opposition Conservatives. Meanwhile **British** protesters called on Pope Benedict XVI to resign last week as they staged a demonstration over the Catholic Church's handling of clerical sex abuse cases.

Relatives of *Bosnian* Muslims killed in **Europe's** worst massacre since World War II lost another round Tuesday in their attempt to sue the United Nations for responsibility. The *Hague* Appeals Court upheld a 2008 lower court ruling affirming U.N. immunity from prosecution enshrined in international conventions that established the world body, and said the legal protection is an essential foundation of its peacekeeping operations around the world.

France's highest administrative body warned last week that a total ban on full-body Islamic veils in public risks being found unconstitutional but that rules requiring the face to be uncovered could be justified. Meanwhile a parliamentary committee in **Belgium** unanimously voted last week to ban the wearing of face-covering veils in public, a major step in the legislative process that could make the country the first European nation to impose such a religious prohibition.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited *Turkey* last week amid the two countries disagreement over the mainly Muslim country's faltering bid to join the European. Also on the agenda for the two-day stay were differences linked to the huge *Turkish* immigrant population in **Germany**, where the world's largest *Turkish* diaspora is located.

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Albania's main opposition Socialist Party (SP) wants to call a referendum on the government's plan to build a nuclear power plant.

The mission of *Canadian* troops in **BiH** officially ended on March 29th with five officers and one non-commissioned soldier returning home.

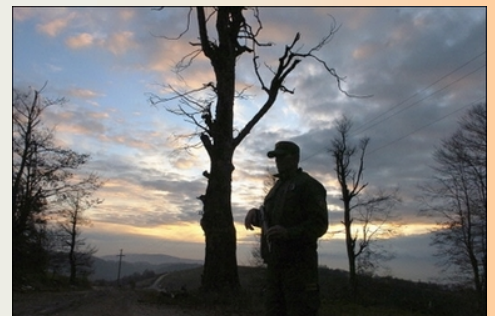
An impeachment motion against **Bulgarian** President Georgi Parvanov, initiated by the ruling GERB party, was introduced in parliament last week after it collected the signatures of 162 lawmakers well over the required 61. Meanwhile a court sentenced six **Bulgarians** to prison Monday (March 29th) for financial fraud and embezzlement of about 7.5m euros granted the country under the EU's SAPARD programme.

The defence ministry of **Croatia** has announced intentions to send 20 more troops to *Afghanistan* by September. Meanwhile 79 **Macedonian** soldiers left last week for *Afghanistan*, where they will join **Macedonia's** 170-strong contingent within the NATO-led mission ISAF.

Greek Ambassador to **Macedonia** Alexandra Papadopoulou last week condemned nationalist slogans chanted during a military parade in Athens. She was summoned to the **Macedonian** Foreign Ministry where Deputy Foreign Minister Zoran Petrov demanded a formal apology.

According to media reports **Kosovo's** Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and representatives of the junior government partner, the Democratic League of **Kosovo**, have reached an agreement to restructure the government. Meanwhile the opposition has criticized the coalition for trying to distract the public from alleged corruption and mismanagement.

US troops handed over management of the borderline between **Kosovo** and **Macedonia** to the **Kosovo** Police last week.



Montenegro's opposition Movement for Changes filed a no-confidence motion against the government last week. The opposition accuses the government of failing to fight corruption and organized crime, as well as inefficiency in addressing the economic situation.

In **Romania** buses and trams in Bucharest came to a halt last week after thousands of drivers staged a strike without advance warning, protesting government austerity measures that would cut their wages and Easter bonuses.

Polish Defense Minister is on a visit to Afghanistan to celebrate Easter with **Polish** troops stationed in Afghanistan.

US President Barack Obama met leaders of 11 central and eastern European countries in Prague last week. The meeting, held after the signing of a major nuclear weapons control treaty between the *United States* and *Russia*, dealt with these countries' role in Afghanistan, and reassured the former Soviet satellites that by resetting its relations with Moscow, the United States would not curtail its interest in the region.

Visiting **Slovak** Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak and his *Indonesian* counterpart, Marty Natalegawa, signed an agreement last week aimed at bolstering economic ties between the two countries.

Hungary's opposition European People's Party-affiliated FIDESZ has announced that it will bar foreigners from buying arable land indefinitely if it wins elections this month. Fidesz is widely expected to obtain an absolute majority in parliament.

Belarusian Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food, Vasily Pavlovsky informed that the country

intends to export **Belarusian** flax yarn to *China* and *Japan*. **Belarusian** President Alexander Lukashenko also approved the draft inter governmental agreement signed with Azerbaijan on promotion and reciprocal protection of investments.

Last week, in an oil-for-arms deal with **Belarusian** President Alexander Lukashenko, *Venezuela's* Chavez was able to add advanced ground-to-air radars to his arsenal.

Alexander Surikov, *Russia's* ambassador to **Belarus**, has said

that there is a sharp difference in opinion between the two nations over the cost of a **Belarusian** nuclear power plant project. Last year the **Belarusian** government requested a \$9 billion loan from *Russia* for the construction of the plant.

Cuba, the **Ukraine** and the *Chernobyl International Fund* signed last week a medical cooperation accord, which will give continuity to the medical treatment of children from that nation suffering from health problems as a consequence of the 1986 nuclear accident.

Ukraine's new leadership said last week that it was inviting *Russia* to join the European Union in a plan to restore **Ukraine's** gas pipeline network which carries crucial supplies of **Russian** gas to Europe. The announcement by Prime Minister Mykola Azarov effectively reversed a March 2009 agreement, signed by former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, for the EU to overhaul its pipeline system.

The **Ukrainian** Parliament refused last week to put on the agenda a draft resolution on **Ukraine's** participation in forming a Common Economic Space (CES) together with **Belarus**, *Kazakhstan* and *Russia* and in the development of mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

Tiny *Baltic State* **Estonia** which joined NATO in 2004 said last week that it has taken a surface-to-air missile system from European defense giant MBDA and *Sweden's* SAAB in its largest-ever defense contract.

According to the Cabinet of **Lithuanian**, the *Baltic state*, which used to import 3 billion cubic meters of gas from GAZPROM annually, may have to increase its consumption by 150 percent to 200 percent.

Poland, along with *France* and *Germany*, is seeking to adopt common strategy regarding the future on European Union farming policy.

According to the Finance Ministry estimate, the **Poland's** inflation probably has decreased from 2.9 percent to 2.6 percent year-on-year in March. Meanwhile **Poland's** public debt rose to 49.9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 and stood just 0.1 percentage points below the first debt safety level.

The *International Monetary Fund* has signed an agreement with the **Czech** National Bank to provide it



with about \$1.4 billion.

According to the finance ministry's Debt and Liquidity Management Agency (ARDAL), **Slovakia** has sold 239.5 million euros (\$323.6 million) worth of two-year, zero-coupon state bonds that mature on January 27, 2012.

The International Monetary Fund has approved last week releasing a \$700 million tranche for **Belarus** and said the country was adapting well to higher *Russian* oil prices.

Moody's Investors Service Inc. raised the ratings outlook on **Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania** to stable from negative, reflecting improved financial and economic prospects, as well as likely euro adoption in 2011.

The move by the ruling Centrist Civic Platform party in the **Polish** parliament to increase the women seats to either half or a third of total seats, has aroused enormous controversy. Currently women have about a fifth of the seats in the lower house of the **Polish** parliament and less than 10 percent of the places in the Senate, lower than in many western European countries.

The Controversial **Slovak Patriot Law** requiring Slovak school children to sing the national anthem at the start of each school week and requiring new clerks in state administration to take a pledge of allegiance was passed again by the parliament with minor amendments and became effective on April 1st 2010.

Ukraine's government has cut the salary of President Viktor Yanukovich by 50 percent. The salary of the former president was 41,000 hryvnas or 5,100 dollars. Yanukovich has also ordered to reduce his staff by 20

percent, or more. The staff of his predecessor numbered 530.



RUSSIA

Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov claimed responsibility for the deadly *Moscow* metro last week (which killed 39 people and injured 85 others) following two new suicide bombings that killed at least 12 people in Dagestan.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and *Venezuelan* President

Hugo Chavez are to discuss military and economic cooperation, including a \$2.2 billion loan to buy Russian arms, during his first visit to the South American country. Also **Russia** has offered to help *Venezuela* set up its own space industry, including a satellite launch site,

Meanwhile *Medvedev* and U.S. President Barack Obama last week approved the final terms of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty's successor, which would require the *United States* and **Russia** to both lower their respective strategic arsenals to 1,550 deployed warheads.

Last week **Russian** President Dmitry Medvedev harshly criticized State Duma deputies for failing to attend parliamentary sessions.

Moscow's markets shook off the bomb attacks on the city's metro to move higher last week, after focusing on the relief that the saga surrounding *Greece's* bailout appears finally to have wound down. Meanwhile according to reports *Germany's* Henkel plans to build two more plants in **Russia** for the production of mortar by 2012.

According to the Deputy Prime Minister **Russia's** LUKOIL Company will invest 480 million dollars into the exploration and production of oil and gas in *Uzbekistan* over 2010. Meanwhile the signing of a contract between **Russia** and *Belarus* to build the ex-Soviet republic's first nuclear power plant has been delayed due to disagreements over the project's cost.

US/CANADA

US Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev agreed to an historic arms-control treaty on March 26th, calling for a substantial reduction of the two countries' deployed nuclear arsenals.

The **United States** last week finalized its first greenhouse gas emissions rules on automobiles and

significantly boosted fuel efficiency standards for the first time since the 1970s, moves **Canada** jointly imposed on its industry.

According to reports the RBC **Canadian** Consumer Outlook Index dipped to 108 points in March from 109 in February, signaling that overall sentiment has barely budged. The index has been edging up and down since its launch in December, reflecting opinions that the country's economic recovery will be a bumpy one.

LATIN AMERICA

The **Bolivian** and **Argentine** governments have updated a natural gas contract dating back to 2006, establishing guarantees for both sides and also for construction of a \$98 million gas pipeline.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, president of **Brazil**, has announced plans to visit Iran in May, to prevent that the crisis provoked by the nation's nuclear program.

According to a recent poll 76% of **Brazilians** see the government of President Lula da Silva as good or great. The popularity of **Brazil's** president is at its highest level since he took office in 2003. Meanwhile the president launched a \$878 billion program to upgrade **Brazil's** infrastructure last week, setting out a major campaign banner for his chosen candidate in October elections.

Mexican President Felipe Calderon alleged last week that powerful groups in the *United States* appear to be blocking efforts to stem the flow of assault weapons fueling **Mexico's** drug war.

Energy and Resources Minister Gerry Brownlee and **Mexico's** Secretary of Energy Georgina Kessels have signed a cooperation arrangement in Cancun, **Mexico** to facilitate bilateral collaboration in the field of renewable energy. Meanwhile **Mexico's** peso rose for the third time this week as the unemployment rate in February fell more than the forecasted level.

Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez said last week in Quito that his government has decided to "wait for the upcoming elections and see the attitude of the next **Colombian** President" to make a decision on resumption of bilateral relations. Meanwhile **Venezuela's** Foreign Minister Nicolás Maduro described as "politicized" the position of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which reported the "lack of independence" of the Judiciary in **Venezuela**. Also **Venezuela's** highest court last week barred an outspoken opponent of President Hugo Chavez from talking to news media about criminal charges alleging he struck a police official. Following the incident the leader of **Venezuela's** Roman Catholic Church accused the government of using judges and prosecutors to punish political adversaries.

With cycling and athletics medalists coming from the South American games, **Venezuelan** President Hugo Chávez decreed the whole week of Easter as holidays in order to save energy. Chavez has also announced the discovery of a "super well" that shows an offshore field holds almost twice as much natural gas as originally estimated.



AUSTRALASIA **Australia** has expressed alarm at growing support for a plan to allow limited commercial whaling, saying it could not accept the proposal before the International Whaling Commission (IWC). **New Zealand**, which also opposes whaling, is supporting moves to allow restricted commercial hunts over the next 10 years if it means a big cut to the number of whales currently killed by *Iceland, Norway and Japan*.

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd last week announced Australia's first population minister, citing concerns about sustainability as the number of people is tipped to balloon within decades. §

