

1 December 2006, N°40

CrisisWatch:

- summarises briefly developments during the previous month in some 70 situations of current or potential conflict, listed alphabetically by region, providing references and links to more detailed information sources (all references mentioned are hyperlinked in the electronic version of this bulletin);
- assesses whether the overall situation in each case has, during the previous month, significantly deteriorated, significantly improved, or on balance remained more or less unchanged;
- alerts readers to situations where, in the coming month, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict, or a particular conflict resolution opportunity (noting that in some instances there may in fact be both); and
- summarises Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers that have been published in the last month.

CrisisWatch is compiled by Crisis Group's Brussels Research Unit, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our nearly 120 staff members across five continents, who already report on some 50 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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December 2006 Watchlist



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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

↓ Burundi September ceasefire between government and FNL rebels held, but implementation of agreement increasingly divisive. Law granting temporary immunity for rebel signatories adopted but FNL refused to join Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism while some rebels remain political prisoners. Government set up commissions to determine those entitled to demobilisation benefits but without FNL input - contrary to agreement. South African contingent of UN peacekeepers to stay on as first part of AU deployment to avoid security vacuum after UN departure mid-December. Pressure on media increased as 3 leading journalists arrested on questionable grounds.

- ["Huge challenges in solving land crisis"](#), IRIN, 23 Nov. 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°120, [Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk](#), 30 November 2006. Unless the government reverses its authoritarian course, it risks triggering violent unrest. Recent actions, in particular the arrest of leading opposition figures and journalists, have damaged the country's political fabric and could hamper implementation of the ceasefire agreement. The international community must remain engaged even after UN peacekeepers leave in December and encourage Bujumbura to respect the rule of law and open dialogue with its critics. The new UN Peacebuilding Commission has a central role to play in all efforts to consolidate the peace.



↓ ↘ Central African Republic Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) rebels intent on toppling President François Bozizé took town of Birao 3 November, near border with Darfur and continued towards Bria 600 km from capital Bangui. Government later retook Birao with help of French troops attacked by UFDR. 45,000 fled fighting to refugee camps in Chad. Central African Economic and Monetary Community responded positively to request for help from Bangui and pledged support.

- ["French army clash with CAR rebels"](#), BBC, 29 Nov. 2006.
- ["Troops, raiders prey on Central African villagers"](#), AlertNet, 21 Nov. 2006.
- ["Central African Republic gets help to fight rebels"](#), AFP, 18 Nov. 2006.

↘ Democratic Republic of Congo Election Commission announced incumbent Joseph Kabila's victory over Jean-Pierre Bemba in October presidential run-off vote: Kabila received 58%, Bemba 42%. Supreme Court confirmed Kabila's victory, while Bemba, after initially rejecting result, accepted outcome 28 November and said would play role of opposition through legal means. Bemba supporters set fire to Court and battled with security forces 21 November. Earlier, fighting in Kinshasa between Bemba supporters and security forces killed 4. Kabila inauguration due 6 December. Tribal clash in western Bandundu province 20 November killed 8. MONUC and army/11th brigade clashed with forces of rebel leader Laurent Nkunda from 25 November around city of Sake in North Kivu.

- ["Sporadic fighting continues near Sake"](#), IRIN, 29 Nov. 2006.

- ["Bemba accepts DR Congo poll loss"](#), BBC, 28 Nov. 2006.
- ["Eight die in tribal clashes in western DR Congo"](#), AFP, 20 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°42, [Securing Congo's Elections: Lessons from the Kinshasa Showdown](#), 2 Oct. 2006.

↘ Rwanda French judge, Jean-Louis Bruguière, said President Paul Kagame should be arrested and tried by International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and French courts respectively in connection with 1994 downing of plane carrying Hutu President Habyarimana which sparked genocide. Kagame responded by breaking diplomatic relations with France.

- ["Rwanda's mystery that won't go away"](#), BBC, 29 Nov. 2006.

↘ Uganda Peace talks between government and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) suspended by LRA 29 November, ostensibly for killing by Ugandan army (UPDF) of 3 rebels on way to assembly point: army denied involvement. Revised cessation of hostilities agreement had been signed 1 November to specify assembly points, provide for security and humanitarian assistance, and removal of UPDF from near assembly points; included 1 December deadline for LRA to collect at Owiny Ki-Bul and Ri-Kwangba, and subsequent resumption of talks. Negotiations plagued by dissatisfaction within LRA delegation and lack of monitoring mechanisms of LRA and UPDF. LRA leader Joseph Kony met with UN humanitarian chief Jan Egeland 11 November and asked for ICC indictments to be removed; Egeland asked for release of non-combatants, sick and wounded fighters: neither agreed. UN Human Rights Commissioner Louise Arbour urged Uganda to halt "forced disarmament" operations against semi-nomadic Karamoja warriors in northeast after 55 civilians killed early November.

- ["Talks hit fresh snag amid rebel protest"](#), IRIN, 30 Nov. 2006.
- ["U.N. rights chief urges Uganda to halt operations against Karimojong warriors"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Nov. 2006.
- ["UN should stress peace, justice go hand in hand"](#), Human Rights Watch, 16 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°41, [Peace in Northern Uganda?](#), 13 Sept. 2006.

HORN OF AFRICA

↓ ↘ Chad Violence in east increased dramatically, with state of emergency declared 13 November. Gunmen killed 220 villagers in east; over 60 villages attacked in month. MSF aid worker also killed and over 3,000 IDPs reported missing following incident near Koloy 100km northeast of Goz Beida 16/17 November. Sudanese-backed rebels briefly captured key eastern town of Abeche 25 November. Government forces retook it following day, but rebels claimed to be 200km from N'djamena and closing. UN aid agencies evacuated non-essential staff and set up HQ in Cameroon after Abeche supplies looted. Security concerns prevented UN fact-finding team from visiting eastern Chad to consider options for deployment of monitoring mission or peacekeeping force.

- ["African leaders to discuss plans to end worsening Darfur, Chad conflict"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Nov. 2006.
- ["Arab civilians also targeted by militias"](#), Human Rights Watch, 27 Nov. 2006.
- ["Villagers say Chad fighting killed at least 220: UN team"](#), AFP, 9 Nov. 2006.

↳ Ethiopia Parliament, including opposition, backed PM Meles in war against Somalia's Council of Somali Islamic Courts (CSIC) 23 November, responding to CSIC's September call for jihad. Over 100 trucks carrying Ethiopian troops arrived in Somali city of Baidoa 24 November; more massing on border. Ethiopian soldiers killed in CSIC ambushes in Somalia (see Somalia section). Eritrean-backed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rebels called for mediation by African nations. Oromo media reported OLF killed 35 soldiers in south 13 November.

- "Ethiopian deaths spark fears of devastating war", *Independent*, 23 Nov. 2006.
- "Ethiopia must prepare to fight Somali Islamists-PM", Reuters, 23 Nov. 2006.

↳ Ethiopia/Eritrea Both sides continued to back opposing sides in Somalia, raising fear of full-scale proxy war. Meanwhile, both rejected mid-November proposal by independent boundary commission to demarcate border on maps but leave physical demarcation to two countries to complete within a year.

- "Horn border foes given one year", BBC, 29 Nov. 2006.
- "Ethiopia, Eritrea reject border proposal", *Mail & Guardian*, 21 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°101, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*, 22 Dec. 2005.

↳ Somalia U.S. submitted draft UNSC resolution recommending IGAD peacekeeping force to support Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and monitor compliance with agreements reached in Khartoum, but any deployment without prior agreement by Council of Somali Islamic Courts (CSIC) widely seen as likely to generate full-scale war. CSIC fighters clashed with Ethiopian troops backing TFG in Adale and Qasah-Omane near Baidoa 19/20 November; 6 Ethiopians reported killed. CSIC claimed 30 November ambush killed 20 Ethiopian soldiers. Talks between CSIC and TFG in Khartoum collapsed 1 November, postponed to 16 December. Report by UN Monitoring Group stated 10 countries, including members of IGAD, continued to violate UN arms embargo on Somalia: UNSC unanimously voted for continuation of monitoring group 29 November.

- "Somalia Conflict Risk Alert", Crisis Group, 27 Nov. 2006.
- "The rumbling rumours of war", *Economist*, 30 Nov. 2006.
- Comment by John Prendergast and Colin Thomas Jensen (Crisis Group), "Getting it wrong in Somalia, again", *Boston Globe*, 29 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°116, *Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?*, 10 Aug. 2006.

↳ Somaliland (Somalia) UN Monitoring Group reported Somaliland authorities' concern over Ethiopian military support for Puntland, with which it has long-standing border dispute. Council of Somali Islamic Courts leader stated intention to maintain unified Somalia and offered apology for misrule of Somaliland under late President Siad Barre.

- "Somaliland: a window to the future", openDemocracy, 21 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°110, *Somaliland: Time for African Union Leadership*, 23 May 2006.

↳ Sudan Major fighting erupted in south between Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in first major violation of 2005 north-south peace agreement. Fighting between SAF-aligned southern militia led

by Maj Gen Gabriel Tang Ginye and SPLA escalated into major clashes between SAF and SPLA in Malakal, Upper Nile state 28 November: casualties reportedly in the hundreds. Calm restored to Malakal, following high-level interventions by SAF, SPLA and UN. Deterioration of security situation in Darfur continued as hopes raised by international talks with Khartoum, then ebbed with government backing away from agreement. UK, U.S., EU, China, Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria and Arab League met in Addis Ababa 19 November to discuss 3-phase plan. Khartoum agreed in principle to phases 1 and 2: light technical support to existing AU force, followed by heavy support including deployment of military, police and civilian personnel as well as possible aviation and logistical assets. AU and UN reported Khartoum also agreed, in principle, to "hybrid" AU/UN operation (Phase 3), pending clarification of force size. China reportedly encouraged Khartoum to accept plan. President Bashir later rejected hybrid force in preference for "African solution", and claimed less than 9,000 have died in Darfur. SPLM called for UN force even without consent of Khartoum. U.S. and UK suggested 1 January deadline for Khartoum to consent to AU/UN hybrid plan, or face "tougher measures". AU PSC met in Nigeria on 29 November, agreed to extend mandate of AU mission for another 6 months.

- "Calm after heavy fighting in southern town", IRIN, 30 Nov. 2006.
- "UN expects plan on Darfur mission to advance", *International Herald Tribune*, 28 Nov. 2006.
- "ICC says Darfur evidence enough to prosecute", Reuters, 23 Nov. 2006.
- Comment by John Prendergast (Crisis Group), "So how come we haven't stopped it?", *Washington Post*, 19 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°43, *Getting the UN into Darfur*, 12 Oct. 2006.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

↳ Angola Voter registration began ahead of first elections since 1992. No date set yet for 2007 poll to select president and legislature. 63 members of opposition arrested in attempted protest over alleged government embezzlement of public funds.

- "Angola graft protesters arrested", BBC, 10 Nov. 2006.

↳ Madagascar Retired General Fidy led failed military coup attempt 17 November after he was barred from contesting 3 December elections; 1 killed in exchange of fire near capital.

- "Une tentative de putsch échoue à Antananarivo à deux semaines de l'élection présidentielle", *Le Monde*, 20 Nov. 2006.

↳ Zimbabwe Speculation over President Mugabe's successor intensified ahead of ZANU-PF's December annual congress, where announcement expected on timetable for 2008 presidential elections; 2-year deferral possible. Government announced compensation 16 November for white farmers who have faced land seizures, but did not make public terms of deal. In concurrent bid to raise production by providing collateral for resettled black farmers, government announced new series of 99-year leases on farming land. South Africa announced it would hand SADC Zimbabwe portfolio to troika of Tanzania, Namibia and Angola, leaving its own future role in question. Local Government Minister Ignatius Chombo reportedly planning task force to begin new effort to clear country of informal dwellings, in wake of rebuilding after Operation Murambatsvina.

- [“Mugabe succession war intensifies”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 16 Nov. 2006.
- [“You will be thoroughly beaten’: The brutal suppression of dissent in Zimbabwe”](#), Human Rights Watch, Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°117, *Zimbabwe: An Opposition Strategy*, 24 Aug. 2006.

WEST AFRICA

- 📍📍 Côte d’Ivoire Situation potentially explosive as relations between PM Banny and President Gbagbo deteriorated. Security forces under Gbagbo control took to streets of Abidjan 28 November and demonstrations against Gbagbo’s reinstating government officials suspended over September’s deadly toxic waste scandal erupted 30 November. UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1721 1 November backing AU call to prolong transition for further 12 months. Resolution notably allows Banny to legislate independently of president and parliament, and to exert “necessary authority” over armed forces; Gbagbo refused to implement clauses contrary to constitution. Clashes between residents of Yopougon suburb and pro-government Patriot Grouping for Peace militia 3 November killed 4, while UN official briefly abducted 6 November by pro-Gbagbo militia in western town of Duekoue.
 - [“Anti-Gbagbo demonstrations erupt”](#), IRIN, 30 Nov. 2006.
 - [“Ivorian Premier vows to pursue divisive peace plan”](#), Reuters, 8 Nov. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°40, *Côte d’Ivoire: Stepping Up the Pressure*, 7 Sept. 2006.

- 📍 Liberia Reforms inched forward. Judicial reform process initiated by UNMIL and justice ministry faced new problems over salary payments for UNMIL-hired lawyers. Security sector reform criticised as “deactivated” security personnel demanded additional benefits including salary arrears and insurance.
 - [“Political parties take issue with gov’t”](#), *Inquirer*, 22 Nov. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 Apr. 2006.

- 📍 Mali Tuareg rebels reportedly reneged on peace agreement with government by simply withdrawing but not disarming, though army pledged not to react. Tuareg have vowed to remove Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat from their territory in north.
 - [“Mali counts on negotiation, not force with rebels”](#), AlertNet, 17 Nov. 2006.

- 📍 Nigeria Political chaos, electoral violence and Niger Delta insecurity continued. 2 more state governors (Anambra and Plateau) sacked by factions of their state legislatures. Ongoing feud between President Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar: 2 courts ruled in Abubakar’s favour on his right to challenge indictment by Economic and Financial Crimes Commission; another overruled government’s attempt to dismiss his challenge of competence of Code of Conduct Tribunal to try him. Obasanjo dented by 2 high-profile scandals connected to his office. Insecurity continued in Niger Delta region with several attacks on oil and police stations. 4 died in rescue attempt after 7 oil workers seized by militants. Obasanjo turned down request by Ijaw elders for release of leader of Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force Asari-Dokubo, currently standing trial on treasonable felony charges. 14 killed as ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) held its ward

- congresses nationwide 4 November in preparation for April 2007 elections; further violence reported at 25 November primaries including bombing of PDP secretariat in Bayelsa state. Upsurge in unrest anticipated in run-up to April elections.
 - [“We will not abandon Niger Delta to bandits, President Obasanjo pledges”](#), *Nigeria First*, 25 Nov. 2006.
 - [“Nigeria VP to run for president”](#), BBC, 25 Nov. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°118, *Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis*, 28 Sept. 2006; and Crisis Group Africa Report N°119, *Nigeria’s Faltering Federal Experiment*, 25 Oct. 2006.

- 📍 Senegal President Wade met with Casamance leaders 24 November in effort to consolidate peace, announcing several measures for reconstruction including amnesty law, 60 million CFA francs in aid and rebuilding of roads.
 - [“Gen Fall calls on Jammeh”](#), *Daily Observer*, 17 Nov. 2006.
- 📍 Sierra Leone Deadline for repatriation of 25,000 Liberian refugees from SL set for 30 June 2007. Rumours of coup plot sparked by arrest of soldier and former RUF fighter Abdul Sesay with arms cache 7 November and subsequent escape.
 - [“Have we failed yet another security test?”](#), *Concord Times*, 17 Nov. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

- 📍 Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev’s power consolidated after Civic Party merged with Nazarbayev’s Otan (Fatherland), country’s largest political grouping, 10 November.
 - [“Pro-Nazarbaev party merges with President’s power base”](#), RFE/RL, 10 Nov. 2006.
- 📍 Kyrgyzstan New constitution establishing parliamentary checks on presidential power ratified by President Bakiyev 9 November. Adoption came after tense week of opposition mass protests demanding constitutional change or Bakiyev’s resignation. PM Feliks Kulov rejected opposition calls for his resignation after the crisis. Sanjar Kadyraliyev, widely considered to control much of drug trafficking and racketeering in south, sworn into parliament 20 November.
 - [“Making Kyrgyzstan’s constitutional reform stick”](#), IWPR, 21 Nov. 2006.
 - [“Kyrgyz Prime Minister says he has no plans to resign”](#), RFE/RL, 15 Nov. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, *Kyrgyzstan on the Edge*, 9 November 2006. Kyrgyzstan remains on the brink of a civil war that could destabilise the region despite adoption of new constitution on 9 November. Confrontation between government and opposition demonstrators risks deepening into wider conflict. Beyond the need for diplomatic initiatives to head off violence, the OSCE, EU, Russia, Kazakhstan and the U.S. need to help launch a national reconciliation effort.



- 📍 Tajikistan Incumbent Emomali Rahmonov won 6 November presidential elections with 79% of vote. Nearest rival, Olimjon

Boboyev, (Economic Reforms Party) got 6%. Turnout reported at 90%, but OSCE said poll fell short of international standards.

- ["Tajik president wins expected landslide"](#), IWPR, 7 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, ["Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?"](#), 19 May 2004.

➡ Turkmenistan President Niyazov dismissed 3 remaining regional governors, following similar October dismissals. Visiting German FM Frank-Walter Steinmeier criticised Ashgabat for human rights record and democracy "deficit".

- ["Steinmeier criticizes Central Asia's forgotten dictatorship"](#), Deutsche Welle, 2 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, ["Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy"](#), 4 Nov. 2004.

➡ Uzbekistan EU, after intense debate, continued arms embargo and travel ban on senior Uzbek officials imposed following 2005 Andijon events, but announced resumption of bilateral "technical meetings" with aim of promoting dialogue on human rights. Alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir regional leader Komiljon Usmonov sentenced to 10 years. Tensions with Tajikistan underlined after Tajik border guard shot dead Uzbek guard 16 November and Uzbek military court sentenced 3 women and 2 men to 15-20 year prison terms for spying for Tajikistan.

- ["A new Tajik-Uzbek cycle of tension"](#), RFE/RL, 28 Nov. 2006.
- Comment by Andrew Strohlein (Crisis Group), ["Beyond sanctions"](#), Transitions Online, 22 Nov. 2006.
- ["Uzbekistan sentences five for spying for Tajikistan"](#), RFE/RL, 17 Nov. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°54, ["Uzbekistan: Europe's Sanctions Matter"](#), 6 November 2006.

The EU must resist attempts to roll back sanctions following the 2005 Andijon massacre. Uzbekistan has not complied with any EU demands to allow an international investigation into the massacre, stop show trials and improve its human rights record. Accordingly the sanctions regime should be broadened to target newly appointed officials who are part of the inner circle including the president; and extended to freeze the assets of those on the visa ban list.

SOUTH ASIA

➡ Afghanistan Violence subsided in some areas with onset of winter. Overseers of Afghanistan Compact, Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board, reported 3700 deaths due to insurgency since January 2006 - four-fold increase over 2005. Report noted deteriorating security one reason for slow progress on development goals, and approved new controversial Auxiliary Police initiative, which gives locally recruited police teams only 10-day training, raising fears of rearming militias and heightened ethnic tensions. UK PM Blair, in visit to Kabul 20 November, pledged military support for Afghanistan for "as long as it takes" and urged NATO to renew focus on country. NATO members lifted some geographical restrictions on their respective deployments at Riga summit 28 November but little concrete consensus.

- ["Nato discord mars Afghan headway"](#), *Financial Times*, 29 Nov. 2006.
- ["There's marijuana in their socks"](#), *Economist*, 16 Nov. 2006.
- ["President Karzai discusses worsening security"](#), RFE/RL, 9 Nov. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°123, ["Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes"](#), 2 November 2006. Rising violence is a wake-up call to rethink policies. Regrouped within Pakistan, Taliban and other anti-government elements have stepped up pressure; disenfranchised people are responding to extremists. Urgent measures are needed including more international forces. Efforts to stabilise Afghanistan will be about containment at best until the international community puts real pressure on Pakistan to tackle militant leaderships and reverse policies that feed extremism. Promoting rule of law is key to countering the insurgency and strengthening government legitimacy.

➡ Bangladesh Major new violence feared, as country steeped in political crisis with opposition to interim caretaker administration installed ahead of January elections. Opposition Awami League (AL) launched 3-day national transport blockade 12 November, citing interim administration's failure to prove its neutrality. Chief Election Commissioner M.A. Aziz stepped down 22 November after renewed blockade accompanied by widespread violence between opposition and government supporters. UN sent electoral assistance envoy 29 November. But AL protests continued, with end of month Dhaka rallies calling for resignation of president and head of interim administration Iajuddin Ahmed, while ruling BNP accused AL of trying to destroy democracy.

- ["Row over Bangladesh election date"](#), BBC, 27 Nov. 2006.
- ["Closed for politics"](#), *Economist*, 16 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°121, ["Bangladesh Today"](#), 23 October 2006.

➡ India (non-Kashmir) Violence escalated in Assam, raising fears of new offensive by ULFA separatist rebels. Assam capital Guwahati hit by series of bombings 5 and 23 November killing 16; ULFA also suspected of train bombing in neighbouring West Bengal state 21 November that killed 12. Delhi announced deployment of 2000 extra troops to region. At least 3 killed in late month violence by "low-caste" Hindus in Maharashtra state prompted by desecration of statue of revered constitution framer B.R. Ambedkar in Kanpur.

- ["Caste protests grip Indian state"](#), BBC, 30 Nov. 2006.
- ["India steps up security after deadly train blast"](#), AlertNet, 21 Nov. 2006.
- ["More troops for India's north-east"](#), BBC, 9 Nov. 2006.

➡ Kashmir Foreign secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan 14-16 November yielded little progress on Kashmir sticking points. Both countries agreed to implement mechanism to improve communication on anti-terrorism measures; agreement not expected to produce much shared intelligence or policy, but sign that normalisation process not derailed by July Mumbai train bombings.

- ["S Asia rivals in anti-terror move"](#), BBC, 15 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°51, ["India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace"](#), 15 June 2006.

➡ Nepal Maoists and interim government signed historic peace deal 21 November, ending 10-year war. Maoists will join interim government, with constituent assembly elections scheduled for mid-2007. Details on arms management, sticking point of negotiations, finalised 27 November. Sides

agreed to lock up weapons under UN supervision, state army will stay in barracks and armed Maoist fighters will be cantoned. Accord also contained provisions for truth and reconciliation commission but interim constitution and plans for restructuring security sector not yet agreed. Judicial commission submitted report to PM Koirala holding King Gyanendra, his ministers and security officials responsible for violent suppression of pro-democracy movement in April.

- "Maoists sign peace deal in Nepal", *New York Times*, 21 Nov. 2006.
- "Nepal king blamed for crackdown", BBC, 20 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°115, *Nepal: From People Power to Peace?*, 10 May 2006.

➤ Pakistan Major suicide attack 9 November on military camp in North West Frontier Province killed 42; possible revenge attack for 30 October madrasa bombing in Bajaur. President Musharraf visited Balochistan 17 November to announce increased investment in region, but greeted by "shutter-down strike", while clashes between troops and Baloch militants near Kohlu intensified in month. In visit to Lahore, UK PM Tony Blair reaffirmed shared commitment to fighting terrorism.

- "Heavy fighting in Kohlu areas", *Dawn*, 23 Nov. 2006.
- "42 Pakistani soldiers killed in revenge attack on camp", *Guardian*, 9 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°119, *Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan*, 14 Sept. 2006.

➤ Sri Lanka War between LTTE rebels and government troops continued in parts of north and east in month of heavy fighting. No short-term prospect for negotiations as LTTE leader Prabhakaran declared ceasefire "defunct" 27 November and said group renewing "freedom struggle" seeking independent state. Land clashes intensified near Batticaloa, while army bombed Tamil targets, and naval battles continued off Trincomalee and Mannar peninsula. Influential Tamil MP Nadarajah Raviraj shot dead 10 November in blow to moderate Tamil politics. Humanitarian access extremely restricted with few aid corridors available. Government shelling attack on Vakarai refugee camp in east killed 45, as attacks on civilians by both sides continued.

- "Ceasefire over as Tamil Tigers' leader calls for independence", *Guardian*, 28 Nov. 2006.
- "Sri Lanka: the politics of purity", *openDemocracy*, 17 Nov. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°124, *Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process*, 28 November 2006. Negotiators and donors are frustrated by the collapse of the 2002 ceasefire agreed by the government and the rebel LTTE. Still, Sri Lanka needs international engagement more than ever, focusing first on immediate humanitarian and human rights concerns but including a longer-term effort to renew a peace process. Although the initial peace deal probably saved thousands of lives, significant problems in its design ultimately contributed to the failure to reach a political settlement. Until political attitudes on both sides are altered, the conflict is likely to worsen.

NORTH EAST ASIA

➤ North Korea No date set for 6-party talks, despite Beijing talks between U.S. negotiator Christopher Hill and NK envoys. Disparate agenda expected; NK seeks easing of economic sanctions, U.S. full nuclear dismantlement. U.S. officials

suggested incentives might include bilateral talks, unfreezing of NK bank accounts and perhaps formal treaty to mark end of Korean War. South Korea announced would not join U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative; however Seoul supported for first time UN Human Rights Committee resolution 17 November condemning NK's human rights situation.

- "Edging closer to the table", *Economist*, 23 Nov. 2006.
- "China's new North Korea diplomacy", *Asia Times Online*, 14 Nov. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°56, *North Korea's Nuclear Test: The Fallout*, 13 November 2006. Following Pyongyang's nuclear test in October and the world's strong condemnation as expressed in UN Security Council Resolution 1718, the resumption of six-party talks is an encouraging sign. However it is crucial that the U.S. engages directly with North Korea and puts a serious negotiating package on the table. Pyongyang may not be willing to forego nuclear weapons, but no one will know unless Washington sits down with the North to address the regime's deep-seated security anxieties.

➤ Taiwan Strait President Chen Shui-bian continued to face leadership challenges, surviving another opposition attempt at forcing recall referendum 23 November, and facing indictment of his wife and 2 aides on corruption charges. 7 December mayoral elections in Taipei and Kaohsiung will test support for Chen's DPP party. Chen continued to push 3 proposals provocative at home and abroad: constitutional reform, admission to UN, and redistribution of improperly obtained Kuomintang assets.

- "Taiwan's young democracy tested in a comic-opera battle", *New York Times*, 23 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, *China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente*, 21 Sept. 2005.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

➤ Indonesia Official election campaigning in Aceh began 24 November, ahead of 11 December polls. 2 days earlier Hamam Hamid, candidate for governor supported by one GAM faction, attacked by rival faction in Bireuen. Differences over candidates have split GAM leadership, raising questions about movement's political future. 87% of eligible voters registered. Trial of Hasanuddin and 2 other in 2005 beheading of 3 Christian schoolgirls in Poso began in Jakarta. Free Papua Movement rebel Antonius Wamang given life sentence 7 November.

- "Election campaign begins in Aceh", BBC, 24 Nov. 2006.
- "Presidents talk up a storm during whistle-stop visit", *Jakarta Post*, 21 Nov. 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°57, *Aceh's Local Elections: The Role of the Free Aceh Movement*, 29 November 2006. GAM ex-guerrillas are running for office in Aceh's local elections on 11 December, reinforcing the 2005 peace agreement, but differences over candidates have split their leadership. The GAM split could divide its vote to the advantage of established parties and the old political elite, or lead to disaffection in the ranks, producing splinter groups or even intra-GAM violence. It could set back the movement's plans to form a local political party or divert attention from pressing issues such as improving distribution of reintegration funding and finding ex-fighters jobs.

Myanmar/Burma UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari made second visit to country 9 November, included meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi, who said favoured dialogue between UN and ruling junta. U.S. called Myanmar “threat to international security” and said planned Security Council resolution, which is unlikely to avoid Chinese and Russian veto. Ruling junta ordered ICRC to close all field offices, in blow to already restricted humanitarian access. Newly installed Thai government announced more distant relations with Myanmar and said it would review development deals.

- “The self-isolation ward”, *Economist*, 29 Nov. 2006.
- “Unplugging Thailand, Myanmar energy deals”, Asia Times Online, 14 Nov. 2006.

Philippines Prosecutors dropped charges against MILF leader Ebrahim Murad in October bombings; MILF had denied involvement and sharply objected to charges. No timeline set for MILF-Manila talks. 30 soldiers face court martial for February coup attempt; gov’t said would adopt hard line.

- “MILF agrees to return to Malaysian-brokered peace talks”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 29 Nov. 2006.
- “Philippines drops charges against Muslim leader”, AlertNet, 8 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, *Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts*, 19 Dec. 2005.

Thailand PM Surayud, in one of several recent visits to south, made historic apology 2 November to families of those killed by army in suppression of protests in Tak Bai in 2004. Despite recent positive signals of Bangkok’s engagement in south, insurgent violence escalated in month; over 100 local Buddhists fled homes in Yala and Narathiwat and over 1000 schools closed indefinitely in south after Pattani teacher burned alive 24 November. Defence Minister Somtad announced 28 November lifting of martial law in about half of country’s 76 provinces; those considered unstable, including southern border provinces and areas of north alleged to be former PM Thaksin’s strongholds, to remain under martial law.

- “Thailand’s military leaders draft explanation for coup”, AP, 21 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°105, *Thailand’s Emergency Decree: No Solution*, 18 Nov. 2005; and N°98, *Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad*, 18 May 2005.

Timor-Leste PM Ramos-Horta asked Australian and New Zealand troops to stay in Dili alongside UN police; said seeking trilateral accord with UN and Australia on command structure. Peace rallies in Dili to mark 15th anniversary of Santa Cruz massacre united rival gangs in Dili, but gang violence erupted again 19 November, killing Brazilian missionary. Former PM Mari Alkatiri announced would not stand for re-election in 2007.

- “East Timor PM wants foreign troops to stay”, AlertNet, 9 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°120, *Resolving Timor-Leste’s Crisis*, 10 Oct. 2006.

PACIFIC

Fiji Coup tensions escalated as rifts between government and army deepened. Chief of armed forces Frank Bainimarama demanded resignation of PM Laisenia Qarase over controversial measures including preferential land rights for ethnic Fijians and amnesty for those implicated in 2000 coup, some of whom are ministers in

current government. Government threatened to invite intervention from Pacific Island Forum nations, while Bainimarama said would begin “clean-up campaign” 1 December if demands not met. New Zealand brokered talks between Bainimarama and Qarase in Wellington 29 November in last-ditch effort to prevent military coup. Australia acting PM said would consider intervention. 1 December deadline passed peacefully but Bainimarama set new 4 December deadline as army planned military exercises around capital.

- “Fiji coup deadline extended”, Radio NZ, 30 Nov. 2006.
- “Fiji army sets new demand deadline”, *Fiji Times*, 22 Nov. 2006.
- “NZ seeks meeting to scold Fiji chief”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Nov. 2006.

Solomon Islands Spat continued between Canberra and Honiara as PM Sogavare pledged to review legal immunity granted to RAMSI peacekeeping force, alleging troop involvement in illegal prostitution. Australia rejected allegations.

- “RAMSI rejects Solomons prostitute claims”, *The Age*, 15 Nov. 2006.

Tonga Thousands rioted in capital Nuku’alofa 16 November after parliament appeared poised to recess without voting on proposals for greater democracy. Riots killed 8 and destroyed 80% of commercial district. Anti-ethnic Chinese sentiment cited by some as root of violence; 355 charged with riot-related crimes, while 200 Chinese nationals flown out of country in aftermath. Parliament voted to expand from 9 to 21 number of directly elected seats in 30-seat legislature, measure will take effect from 2008 elections. Coronation of new King postponed by 1 year. 150 Australian and New Zealand police and troops arrived 18 November at request of government; military component due to withdraw early December.

- “Turbulence in Tonga”, EIU, 21 Nov. 2006.
- “Tonga ‘should have elected MPs’”, BBC, 6 Oct. 2006.

Europe

BALKANS

Albania President Moisiu set local elections for 21 January; parties unable to agree whether to participate with some calling for delay until after Serbia elections. PM Berisha supported announcement by Athens to offer citizenship to “ethnic Greeks” (anyone who can prove in writing their Greek ethnicity) in and from Albania; opposition in Tirana and Athens criticised plan.

- “Greek citizenship offer raises hackles”, BIRN, 16 Nov. 2006.
- “Party squabbles slow pace of European integration”, BIRN, 2 Nov. 2006.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, *Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?*, 25 Feb. 2004.

Bosnia & Herzegovina Haris Silajdzic, Nebojsa Radmanovic and Zeljko Komsic sworn into collective presidency 6 November. Radmanovic will be chairman for first 8 months of 4-year rotating presidency. In Republika Srpska, PM Milorad Dodik formed new entity government. UN Security Council extended mandate of EU Stabilization Force (EUFOR) to November 2007; troop levels for 2007 remain uncertain. NATO announced would admit BiH to Partnership for Peace program despite failure on ICTY conditionality.

- [“UN Security Council extends EU mission in BiH”](#), Southeast European Times, 22 Nov. 2006.
- [“Concern over Kosovo delays EU decision on cutting Bosnia force”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 13 Nov. 2006.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Report N°164, [Bosnia’s Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU](#), 6 Sept. 2005.

➤ Kosovo UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari announced would delay his status proposals until after 21 January Serbian parliamentary elections. Fears of significant further delay to final status process, due to Russian insistence that Ahtisaari package should serve as basis for further Pristina-Belgrade negotiations, and lukewarm engagement of some other Contact Group and EU members. Kosovo Albanians met announcement with calm, but PM Ceku and co-governing AAK party began broaching idea of unilateral independence declaration if no decision in early 2007. “Self-Determination” demonstration targeted provisional government and UN mission with stones, paint bombs 28 November. In east Kosovo, local Albanian leaders angry Pristina-Belgrade negotiations conceded formation of several new Serb-majority municipalities; arguing blow to integration efforts, and price exacted for ethnic cleansing by other Kosovo regions. Serb shot in head in south-eastern Letnica village 9 November; grenade exploded in empty Serb school classroom, eastern Ropotovo village, 21 November.

- [“Kosovo protesters attack UN site”](#), BBC, 28 Nov. 2006.
- [“Fresh delays likely to Kosovo’s independence”](#), BIRN, 23 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°174, [An Army for Kosovo?](#), 28 July 2006.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°177, [Kosovo Status: Delay Is Risky](#), 10 November 2006. The final status process could break down if the decision is pushed much into 2007. The Contact Group that has sponsored the process must at minimum deliver timely endorsement of the final settlement package. The UN Security Council must pass a resolution superseding resolution 1244 (1999) to allow the UN Mission to transfer its responsibilities to Kosovo’s government and pave the way for new international bodies.

➤ Macedonia Parliament passed police reform bill despite opposition Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) boycott. DUI-PDP coalition warned their mayors, in control of 15 of 16 Albanian majority municipalities, would not cooperate with police. In positive step for judicial independence, 8 members elected to new Judicial Council by fellow judges; council will handle election and dismissal of judges, previously controlled by parliament. EU Commission said progress slowed in 2006, highlighting political hiring and firing of officials, and lack of cooperation between government and opposition as problems. Radmila Sekerinska elected leader of Social Democratic Alliance 5 November.

- [“EU gives cautious welcome to Macedonia’s judicial reforms”](#), BIRN, 9 Nov. 2006.
- [“Macedonia’s parliament adopts new law on police”](#), Southeast European Times, 3 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

➤ Serbia New constitution ratified by parliament after official final results of October constitutional referendum announced: 53.04% of registered voters supported new constitution with

54.91% turnout, despite well-documented irregularities. Parliamentary elections set for 21 January. NATO announced would admit Serbia into Partnership for Peace program despite failure on ICTY conditionality. UN said would postpone Kosovo status decision until after elections (see Kosovo). In Sandzak’s Novi Pazar, Party for Democratic Action activist injured in bomb attack on home.

- [“Bereft of a coastline, and probably soon Kosovo, Serbia slips into a funk”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Nov. 2006.
- [“Bomb hurts senior Serbian Muslim”](#), BBC, 14 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°43, [Southern Serbia: In Kosovo’s Shadow](#), 27 June 2006.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°44, [Serbia’s New Constitution: Democracy Going Backwards](#), 8 November 2006. Serbia is becoming a potential source of instability in the Balkans. It appears that Premier Vojislav Kostunica will use the new constitution to chart a new course that moves away from European integration and creates a hybrid, home-grown form of illiberal, authoritarian democracy. If the West is to have any chance of strengthening Serbian democracy and convincing the government to accept Kosovo’s eventual independence, it will first need to recognise the shape of the problem.

CAUCASUS

➤ Azerbaijan Authorities shut down biggest independent broadcaster, ANS, and evicted an opposition party and 3 media outlets from their offices 24 November. Government opponents said move aimed at silencing dissent. Police broke up demonstration and arrested 12 activists demanding end to official pressure on media 16 November. Former senior presidential administration official Akif Muradverdiyev, arrested before November 2005 elections, sentenced to 6 years for attempt to topple gov’t, embezzlement and abuse of power.

- [“Attacks on Media Hurt Conflict Resolution”](#), Crisis Group media release, 27 Nov. 2006.
- [“Authorities intensify pressure on independent media”](#), RFE/RL, 29 Nov. 2006.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Briefing N°40, [Azerbaijan’s 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity](#), 21 Nov. 2005.

➤ Chechnya (Russia) Suspected rebel attacks killed at least 10 in southern Shatoi and eastern Kurchaloi districts. Russian army said 35 rebels collectively surrendered 22 November, bringing official figure of 2006 surrenders to 374. Former elite unit commander Baisarov, rival of Chechen PM Kadyrov, shot dead in Moscow 18 November, allegedly by Chechen police. European Court of Human Rights, in third such ruling in 4 months, ruled Russia to pay damages to Chechen woman whose relatives disappeared.

- [“Russian army says 35 Chechen rebels surrender”](#), AlertNet, 23 Nov. 2006.
- [“Ministry admits Chechen resistance still poses ‘serious threat’”](#), RFE/RL, 8 Nov. 2006.

➤ North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Militants attacked police station in Ingushetia, injuring 3 soldiers. 5 rebels, including Jordanian born insurgent, killed in clashes with armed forces in Dagestan.

- [“Kremlin plays down impact of Chechen rebel death”](#), AlertNet, 29 Nov. 2006.

➤ Georgia Hawkish Defence Minister Irakli Okruashvili resigned from cabinet 17 November, shortly after being transferred to

Minister of Economic Development post. In South Ossetia, 2 competing presidential elections and referendums held 12 November. De facto President Kokoity re-elected and independence aspirations reaffirmed in separatist referendum. In parallel polls informally backed by Tbilisi, Dmitry Sanakoev elected president and negotiations with Tbilisi supported. International community denounced both polls. Relations with Russia remained tense with air, sea and land communications closed. Moscow continued to deport Georgian illegal migrants. Gazprom announced intention to double gas price in 2007. Senior U.S. and German officials visited Abkhazia, urging sides to resume stalled negotiations.

- "Georgia sets conditions for Russian entry to WTO", RFE/RL, 21 Nov. 2006.
- "South Ossetia, Kosovo and sustainability", ISN, 20 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°176, *Abkhazia Today*, 15 Sept. 2006.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°178, *Georgia's Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 22 November 2006. The government must take significant steps to avoid conflict in the ethnic Armenian and Azeri areas. While there is no risk of Ossetian- or Abkhaz-like threats to Georgia's territorial integrity, tensions are evident in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. Policies are needed that promote inclusion and prevent discrimination against minorities. A comprehensive education system to teach Georgian as a second language should be established, and the use of minority languages for government business allowed in municipalities with large numbers of minority citizens.



➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian met on sidelines of CIS Minsk Summit 28 November. Both sides cited progress at meeting. Foreign ministers met 13 November to continue negotiations toward agreement on principles. De facto authorities set constitutional referendum for 10 December; text declares NK "sovereign, democratic and independent".

- "Azerbaijani president says Karabakh talks in 'final stage'", RFE/RL, 29 Nov. 2006.
- "New push to resolve after-effects of USSR's forgotten war", *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace*, 11 Oct. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Belarus Youth opposition activist Zmitser Dashkevich given 1.5-year prison sentence for participation in unregistered group 1 November; EU condemned decision. Germany called for immediate release of opposition leader Alexander Kazulin amid reports of serious decline in his health; Kazulin is on hunger strike. EU repeated its offer to Minsk of EU Neighbourhood Policy participation, conditional on democratic reform. Lukashenka asserted he had won 93.5% of vote in March presidential elections but official figures of 83% had been released to make results more believable to West.

- "EU urges Belarus to join neighborhood policy", RFE/RL, 21 Nov. 2006.
- "Regime tightens grip at home, but seeks new friends abroad", RFE/RL, 6 Nov. 2006.

➤ Moldova Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov announced candidacy in region's 10 December 'presidential elections'.

Candidacy of newspaper editor Andrei Safonov, known for his criticism of Smirnov, rejected by Transnistrian authorities; Safonov said would appeal. OSCE ambassadorial delegation visited Russian ammunition depot in region 13 November.

- "Journalist's bid for Transnistrian presidency nixed", RFE/RL, 21 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°175, *Moldova's Uncertain Future*, 17 Aug. 2006.

➤ Ukraine Parliament voted to dismiss Foreign Minister Boris Tarasyuk and Interior Minister Yuriy Lutsenko, both allies of President Yushchenko, 1 December. Move came after PM Yanukovich asked parliament to dismiss former, and latter found guilty of corruption by Kiev court. Yushchenko said would challenge Tarasyuk dismissal. Defence Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko may also face no-confidence vote.

- "Vote delayed on Yushchenko allies", BBC, 15 Nov. 2006.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Basque Country (Spain) After spate of low-level street violence in region, including arson attack on 2 policemen in Bilbao, Prime Minister Zapatero said could be no dialogue with ETA if violence continued. Opposition Popular Party issued 10-point list of demands to government on issue, including call for end to any secret meetings with ETA. Separatist Batasuna Party blamed deterioration on authorities, citing series of court cases against ETA members. French police confirmed ETA responsibility of weapons theft in October; said ceasefire had not affected group's activities in France.

- "French police: ETA responsible for weapons heist in France in October", *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Nov. 2006.
- "Basque militants reject calls to rein in street violence in Spain", *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Nov. 2006.

➤ Cyprus EU Finnish Presidency efforts to broker last-minute compromise on opening of Turkish ports to Greek Cypriots, in return for movement on EU direct trade with Turkish Cypriots, broke down, leading to 29 November EU Commission recommendation to slow down Turkey-EU negotiations (see Turkey). UNSG Annan said UN still working to start bi-communal talks; met Turkish Cypriot leader Talat in Geneva 20 November. 5 Turkish Cypriot students attacked in Southern Nicosia school 22 November.

- "Cypriot president condemns attack on Turkish Cypriot schoolchildren", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, *The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?*, 8 Mar. 2006.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) UK parliament passed bill enacting St Andrews deal and allowing January dissolution of Northern Ireland Assembly 21 November. But policing question threatened to delay power-sharing as Unionists insisted Sinn Fein ministers' oath include commitment to support police and rule of law, and Sinn Fein demanded date for handover of policing powers from Westminster to Stormont. Stormont assembly proceedings halted after Michael Stone, loyalist gunman released under the Good Friday Agreement, entered building with bombs and weapons 24 November; Ulster Defence Association distanced itself from incident. Assembly reconvened 27 November; Democratic Unionist Party leader Ian Paisley signalled conditional acceptance of First Minister

post after spring elections and Sinn Fein nominated Martin McGuinness Deputy First Minister.

- [“The great prize of northern Irish peace”](#), *Financial Times*, 27 Nov. 2006.
- [“Ulster politicians return to tightened security”](#), *Guardian*, 27 Nov. 2006.

↳ Turkey After EU Commission progress report 8 November criticising reform slow-down and warning to Ankara to open ports to Republic of Cyprus ships or risk disruption of EU accession process, and failure of Finnish initiative to reach compromise, EU Commission 29 November recommended suspension of negotiations on 8 key chapters; EU member-states set to decide at 11-12 December meeting, although Cyprus still threatening veto. 11 November state funeral of former PM Bulent Ecevit saw secularist protests against attending government ministers. Turkish army announced suspension of all military ties with France in protest of French National assembly passing of bill criminalising denial of 1915 Armenian “genocide”. Pope Benedict stated support of Turkey’s “integration into Europe” during controversial visit.

- [“Cyprus ‘may veto’ EU-Turkey talks”](#), BBC, 30 Nov. 2006.
- [“Turkey ends French military ties”](#), BBC, 16 Nov. 2006.

Latin America / Caribbean

↳ Bolivia President Evo Morales’s reforms met increased opposition, notably in Santa Cruz and eastern provinces. Despite opposition pledges to boycott discussion of agrarian reform bill, Morales’s MAS party steamrolled bill through senate, while 6 of 9 regional governors cut relations with Morales, and thousands marched 21 November in protest organised by civic groups and agro-businesses in Santa Cruz. Morales spoke of popular “revolt” and threatened disbanding of Senate to push through reforms, accusing opposition of injuring Bolivian democracy. MAS party also forced through controversial rules of procedure for Constituent Assembly after 3-month standoff, allowing constitutional changes by simple majority, although final document will require two-thirds’ vote.

- [“Bolivia enacts broad land-reform bill”](#), *LA Times*, 30 Nov. 2006.
- [“Evo Morales acusa a la oposición de impulsar un golpe a la democracia”](#), *El País*, 23 Nov. 2006.
- [“Morales opts for a pragmatic Bolivia”](#), *Financial Times*, 16 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°18, [Bolivia’s Rocky Road to Reforms](#), 3 July 2006.

↳ Colombia FARC violence escalated as series of deadly attacks continued. Mortar attack on police in Tierradentro 1 November killed at least 17, including 3 civilians. Heavy fighting with army forces reported 21 November in Caqueta killed 14. FARC militias launched series of attacks in Cali slums. President Uribe faced growing scandal as investigations grew into links between paramilitary groups and politicians allied to him. Supreme Court charged Senators Alvaro Garcia and Jairo Merlano and Congressman Eric Morris with funding right-wing paramilitaries in Sucre, and 60 current or former members of Congress and politicians under investigation for signing agreement with ex-paramilitary chiefs in 2001 to push for peace deal.

- [“Colombia’s Uribe, facing crisis, threatens ‘paras’”](#), AlertNet, 30 Nov. 2006.

- [“Thugs and politics”](#), *Economist*, 16 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°11, [Tougher Challenges Ahead for Colombia’s Uribe](#), 20 Oct. 2006.

↳ Ecuador Ecuador elected eighth president in ten years in 26 November elections. Left-wing economist Rafael Correa beat banana tycoon Alvaro Noboa with over 60% of vote. Noboa insisted on recount. Correa, friend of Venezuelan President Chavez, wants greater state control over economy, especially oil production, and pledged to remove or renegotiate U.S. presence in Manta military base, but faces uphill battle for legislative program without party representation in Congress.

- [“Correa’s triumph”](#), *Financial Times*, 19 Nov. 2006

↳ Haiti 2 UN peacekeepers killed in ambush attack near Cité Soleil 11 November. Police reported sharp spike in kidnappings, while “Revolutionary Army” gang announced it would start killing police and UN peacekeepers after arrest of member. Haiti declared eligible for HIPC debt relief just prior to 30 November international donors session in Madrid where new pledges expected. Electoral preparations for mayoral, local council, and unfilled parliamentary seats incomplete ahead of 3 December polls.

- [“Judge orders top Haitian police officer arrested”](#), AlertNet, 3 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°12, [Haiti: Security and the Reintegration of the State](#), 30 October 2006.

↳ Venezuela Street rallies across country and some opinion polls confirmed rising popularity of opposition candidate Manuel Rosales ahead of 3 December presidential polls. Incumbent President Chávez still holds comfortable lead. Chavez has claimed Rosales plans coup for election period. National Electoral Council will allow auditing of voting machines in bid to allay opposition fears of voting irregularities. Along with Guatemala, Venezuela withdrew on 7 November to allow election of Panama to Security Council.

- [“Rival says Chavez scares Venezuelans from polls”](#), AlertNet, 21 Nov. 2006.
- [“Setbacks for Venezuela’s leader embolden a vigorous opponent”](#), *Washington Post*, 19 Nov. 2006.
- [“Political powerhouse unites Chávez foes”](#), *Financial Times*, 14 Nov. 2006.

Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

↳ Israel/occupied Territories Fragile Gaza ceasefire took hold 26 November, raising hopes for end to 4-month period of intense violence and destruction in Gaza Strip. PM Olmert offered economic incentives and possibility of negotiations and prisoner release in return for end to Palestinian violence, release of Cpl. Shalit and formation of internationally acceptable unity government. Month saw continued Israeli incursions, assassinations, bombardments and arrests, particularly in Gaza, and continuation of Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israeli towns. Hamas and Fatah agreed to formula for unity government led by Hamas-nominated and President Abbas-approved PM Muhammad Shubair – but Abbas announced negotiations again stalled 29 November. Israeli operations in Beit Hanoun killed dozens of militants and

civilians including 8 November shelling: killing 19 civilians. Hamas claimed responsibility for 23 November Gaza suicide blast by grandmother; Islamic Jihad for 6 November female suicide bomber in Beit Hanoun. Raids continued in West Bank: non-violent civilian protest campaign to protect militant homes resulted in temporary suspension of Israeli aerial demolition campaign. New peace initiative from Spain, backed by Italy and France, and including international peacekeepers in Gaza, rejected by Israel, but Olmert later recognised as positive parts of 2002 Saudi initiative. Israeli relations with UNIFIL (and Europe) deteriorated as IDF warplanes "buzzed" German ships and French positions on Blue Line in reaction to UN protests over Israel's unilateral military manoeuvres in Lebanon.

- "Abbas says talks with Hamas are again deadlocked", *International Herald Tribune*, 30 Nov. 2006.
- "Gaza relishes moment of peace", BBC, 28 Nov. 2006.
- "Hamas carries on with the dance", *Economist*, 16 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°58, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: To Reach a Lasting Peace*, 5 October 2006; and Crisis Group Middle East Initiative, "Global Leaders Call for Action on Arab-Israeli Settlement", 4 Oct. 2006.

Lebanon Political killing and Shiite resignations increased polarisation and brought government close to collapse. Pierre Gemayel, Phalange politician and industry minister, became fifth anti-Syrian Lebanese politician to be killed in 2 years 21 November. Syria denied involvement. Mass funeral rally held 23 November and 2-day national strike 24/25 November. Ruling pro-Western March 14 coalition increasingly embattled after 6 Shiite cabinet members, including 2 Hizbollah, 3 Amal, 1 pro-Lahoud, resigned after coalition insisted on formal approval of UN tribunal on February 2005 Hariri killing. Removal of 2 more cabinet members would make two-thirds quorum impossible. Tribunal approved by cabinet 25 November but President Lahoud refused to give final approval without Shiite vote and called cabinet unconstitutional. Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah stated intention to bring down Siniora government unless national unity formula restored. Military on alert as Nasrallah called for mass "sit-in" protest 1 December in centre of Beirut. Political crisis amplified by sporadic riots and Sunni-Shiite clashes.

- "Lebanon troops prepare for opposition protest", Reuters, 1 Dec. 2006.
- "Without international support, Lebanon may go under", *Daily Star*, 29 Nov. 2006.
- "Lahoud 'to block' Lebanon panel", BBC, 28 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°57, *Israel/Palestine/Lebanon: Climbing Out of the Abyss*, 25 July 2006.

Syria Damascus was focus of regional and international attention: Israeli officials claimed Syria actively preparing for war "next summer"; assassination of Lebanese industry minister Pierre Gemayel blamed on Syria and led to U.S. accusations of Syrian plot to overthrow Siniora government; and UN published allegations connecting Syria, Somali Salafists and Hizbollah. Controversial UN tribunal empowered to prosecute Hariri case likely to be continued source of tension between Damascus, Beirut and the West. Leader of Al-Tawheed Wal Jihad militant group blew himself up near Syrian-Lebanese border 29 November after being chased by security forces.

- Comment by Peter Harling (Crisis Group), "A workable approach to engaging Syria", *Al Hayat*, 26 Nov. 2006.

- "Israel getting ready for war against Hezbollah, Syria", Al Jazeera, 7 Nov. 2006.
- "Syria's first private political daily launched", Reuters, 6 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 Apr. 2005.

GULF

Bahrain Majority Shiites and Sunni/Shiite Islamists made gains in 25 November parliamentary and municipal elections. Shiite Al Wefaq party won 16 of 17 seats it contested in 40-seat lower house. Runoff vote for 11 undecided constituencies due 2 December and will decide on lower house majority of either pro-government Sunnis or opposition alliance of Shiites and liberals. Shura Council, appointed by King Hamad, has final say over any legislation.

- "Alarm at Shia gains in Bahrain's elections", *Independent*, 28 Nov. 2006.
- "Roundup: Bahrain elections 2006", Asharq Alawsat, 28 Nov. 2006.

Iran Tehran offered IAEA inspectors access to records and equipment from nuclear sites at Lavizan and Natanz and requested help building heavy-water reactor at Arak. IAEA rejected reactor request and president Mohammed ElBaradei suggested offer of access will not satisfy UN Security Council. Negotiations continued over U.S./EU3 draft resolution to impose sanctions. Iran declared itself ready to hold talks on regional issues if it receives formal U.S. request, but emphasised this would not signify Iran-U.S. rapprochement. Security talks between President Ahmadi-Nejad and Iraqi President Talabani held 29 November; Talabani claimed visit 100% successful. Elections for Assembly of Experts, highest institutional authority with powers of appointing, dismissing and supervising supreme leader, due 15 December.

- "Europeans narrow scope of Iran UN sanctions draft", Reuters, 1 Dec. 2006.
- "Iran offers UN new nuclear access", BBC, 23 Nov. 2006.
- Comment by Henry Kissinger, "On negotiating with Tehran", *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Nov. 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, *Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?*, 23 Feb. 2006.

Iraq Sectarian violence rose to worst levels since U.S.-led 2003 invasion. 230 killed in 23 November bomb blasts in Baghdad's Shiite Sadr City and retaliatory attacks on Sunni mosques 24 November. Spike in violence followed 14 November kidnapping raid by Shiite militia on Sunni-run Ministry of Higher Education and retaliatory attacks on Shiite-run Health Ministry. Moqtada al-Sadr's Shiite group announced their temporary withdrawal from government in protest at PM Maliki's meeting with U.S. President Bush in Jordan 30 November. Bush expressed support for Maliki and rejected rumours of U.S. gradual withdrawal. U.S. Defence Sec. Rumsfeld resigned following Republican defeat in mid-term elections; policy shift expected after report by bipartisan Iraq Study Group, due 6 December. Pentagon review of options reportedly favours short-term increase in troops with subsequent reduction coupled with long-term concentration on training and advising. Former President Saddam Hussein received death sentence for crimes against humanity; to appeal verdict. Agreement on restoring diplomatic ties with Syria, suspended for 20 years, announced 21 November.

- "He's the right guy' - Bush defends embattled Maliki", *Guardian*, 1 Dec. 2006.

- "Waiting for Baker", *Economist*, 30 Nov. 2006.
- "Carnage rises in Iraq as Shiites retaliate", *International Herald Tribune*, 24 Nov. 2006.
- For most recent Crisis Group report, see Middle East Report N°56, *Iraq and the Kurds: The Brewing Battle over Kirkuk*, 18 July 2006.

- Yemen Authorities shut down Aden port and deployed army around government institutions and foreign oil installations 23 November in response to suicide attack threats by al-Qaeda. Court convicted 34 followers of Shiite cleric Hussein al-Hawthi, who led rebellion in early 2004, for plotting terrorist operations. Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for 15 September suicide attacks on oil and gas facilities.
 - "Authorities in Yemen increase security fearing al-Qaida suicide attacks", *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Nov. 2006.
 - "Al-Qaeda's number two in Yemen to be freed", *Yemen Observer*, 21 Nov. 2006.
 - "Yemen vows to strike with 'iron fist' in face of al-Qaeda threats", *Middle East News*, 8 Nov. 2006.

NORTH AFRICA

- Algeria Clashes between suspected Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) militants and military continued: at least 18 soldiers and 2 security officers killed in clashes in Bouira, Ain Defla and Biskra regions and 15 militants killed in security sweeps 25, 28 November; media reported at least 60 deaths in clashes throughout month.
 - "5 militants killed in Algerian military sweep", *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Nov. 2006.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, *Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page*, 30 July 2004.

- Egypt President Mubarak asked parliament to amend constitution to make it easier for candidates from opposition parties to run for president. Existing article 76, effectively limiting nomination rights to ruling National Democratic party, criticised by opposition as paving way for Mubarak's son Gamal's succession. Muslim Brothers called for resignation of Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni after his comment that Islamic veils "regressive" trend. 3 suspected Tawhid wa 'l-Jihad members sentenced to death and 10 to prison for involvement in October 2004 Taba resort attack.
 - "Egyptian opposition reels under fresh state crackdown", *AlertNet*, 28 Nov. 2006.
 - "Veil dispute in Egypt grows", *Al Jazeera*, 18 Nov. 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°46, *Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy*, 4 Oct. 2005.

- Mauritania Legislative and municipal elections, first after August 2005 coup, held 19 November: 43 of 95 National Assembly seats decided, with seats where no candidate won 50% of vote to be decided in second round 3 December. Parties opposing former leader Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya, ousted by military, won 19 seats while independents gained 24.
 - "Another step in democratic transition", *IRIN*, 23 Nov. 2006.
 - "Mauritanian opposition parties win legislatives seats in close races", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Nov. 2006.

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