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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 more than 110 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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January 2006 Watchlist



Conflict Risk Alert

Ethiopia/Eritrea
Nepal
Sri Lanka



Conflict Resolution Opportunity

None

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Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with over 110 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict. Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, Crisis Group produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers, and backed up with high level advocacy. Crisis Group is chaired by former European Commissioner for External Relations Lord Patten of Barnes, and its President and Chief Executive is former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.



Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

- ↳ Burundi UN Security Council extended peacekeeping mission (ONUB) until July 2006, but authorised "temporary redeployment" of some ONUB personnel to DR Congo. Bujumbura requested UN soldiers leave by mid-2006. Mozambique UN peacekeepers began withdrawal 28 December; ONUB and Burundi's military to develop drawdown plan for remaining troops. Negotiations between government and rebel Front National de Libération (FNL) remained stalled but splinter group argued for talks. Army continued campaign against FNL: since October 120 rebels killed, 600 captured.
 - "Burundi's president sets out revival plan", Independent Online (Reuters), 23 Dec. 2005.
 - "Peacekeeping mission in Burundi extended until July 2006", UN News, 21 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°31, *Elections in Burundi: A Radical Shake-Up of the Political Landscape*, 25 Aug. 2005.

- ↳ Central African Republic Unidentified armed groups in north may be preparing major offensive, according to new AU report. UN Security Council extended mandate of UN peacebuilding mission through to end 2006, in line with CAR government request. Dispute continued between government and civil servants: police prevented rally of civil servants protesting almost 4 years' wage arrears.
 - "Armed groups may be preparing major offensive, AU says", IRIN, 30 Dec. 2005.
 - "Police stops rally by unpaid civil servants", IRIN, 12 Dec. 2005.

- ↳ Chad Security and relations with Sudan deteriorated as rebel group Rally for Democracy and Liberty attacked Chadian forces in Adre near Sudanese border 18 and 19 December, with estimates of over 100 killed. Chad and Sudan continued to trade accusations over support to each other's rebel movements. Chad blamed Khartoum for clashes and declared "state of belligerence" against Sudan. President Deby faced increasing dissension within army and government, and defections from inner circle of advisers to new Zaghawa-dominated rebel movement SCUD.
 - "Rebel leader: Chad group to launch offensive soon", CNN (Reuters), 22 Dec. 2005.
 - "Chad's Deby faces tenuous times", *Sudan Tribune* (VOA), 17 Dec. 2005.

- ↳ Democratic Republic of Congo First democratic vote in 4 decades saw overwhelming majority (78%) approve constitution in 18-19 December referendum, paving way for 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections. Pasteur Theodore Ngoye, presidential candidate and leader of "No" vote during referendum, arrested; called for referendum annulment due to "irregularities". In Katanga, 11,000 fled violence adding to 30,000 recently displaced as result of DRC military operations against Mai Mai militias. Situation slowly began to improve in east, with army and UN conducting joint operation against Ugandan rebels. 185 FDLR returned to Rwanda to disarm. UN Security Council threatened sanctions if rebels do not disarm by 15 January.
 - "U.N. aims to pacify east Congo for vote", CNN, 26 Dec. 2005.

- Comment by Jason Stearns (Crisis Group), "Elections in the Congo not an end in themselves", *East African*, 19 Dec. 2005.
 - "A ray of hope in the heart of Africa", *The Economist*, 16 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°34, *A Congo Action Plan*, 19 Oct. 2005.
- ↳ Gabon Violent demonstrations by opposition supporters protesting "rigged" 27 November presidential election led to government ban on demonstrations and "shoot without warning" policy. Opposition claimed 5 protestors killed and challenged official results which gave President Omar Bongo 79.2% of vote and third term in office.
 - "Election protesters may be shot, Gabon says", CNN, 3 Dec. 2005.

 - ↳ Kenya Internal government crisis continued after several newly appointed cabinet members refused posts. President Kibaki accused of failing to consult coalition partners and ignoring no confidence vote of November referendum's failure to approve draft constitution. Government called off police recruitment drive following allegations of widespread corruption.
 - "Bribes paid to join Kenya police", BBC, 16 Dec. 2005.
 - "Key coalition partners reject Kenya cabinet posts", CNN (AP), 8 Dec. 2005.

 - ↳ Rwanda UN tribunal sentenced former army officer and MP Aloys Simbato to 25 years in prison for participating in 1994 genocide and convicted former Gikoro mayor for murder and extermination as crimes against humanity.
 - "Police quizzes ex-MP over genocide remarks", *The New Times*, 30 Dec. 2005.

 - ↳ Tanzania Ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party won landslide victory in 14 December parliamentary elections, taking 206 of 232 seats. CCM presidential candidate Foreign Minister Jakaya Kikwete won 80% of vote, replacing President Mkapa who stepped down after 2 terms as required by constitution. AU and SADC observers said polls "free and fair", praised high voter turnout. But election-related violence on Zanzibar continued: 46 arrested after opposition supporters clashed with police.
 - "Landslide for ruling party", IRIN, 19 Dec. 2005.
 - "Observers say Tanzania polls 'free and fair, transparent, credible'", Southern African News Features, 16 Dec. 2005.

 - ↳ Uganda President Museveni and 5 others officially nominated for March 2006 presidential elections, including main opposition candidate Kizza Besigye, awaiting trial on charges including treason and terrorism. UK cut \$26 million in direct aid over concerns about state of democracy. International Court of Justice ruled Uganda violated DR Congo's sovereignty and abused human rights during 1998-2003 war; DRC demanded \$10 billion in compensation.
 - "Museveni lashes out at critics", IWPR, 23 Dec. 2005.
 - For background see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°23, *Shock Therapy for Northern Uganda's Peace Process*, 11 Apr. 2005.

HORN OF AFRICA

- ↳ Ethiopia Prosecutors charged 131 jailed opposition leaders, reporters and aid workers with crimes ranging from treason to genocide, many carrying death penalty, in connection with November protests over disputed May elections. Donors to withhold \$375 million in direct aid in response to crackdown on

opposition. 3 Oromo students killed in police response to continued public unrest. Opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy MPs ended boycott of parliament, called for dialogue, in attempt to resolve dispute with ruling party over elections and detention of leaders.

- "Ethiopia opposition makes no plea in treason case", AlertNet, 28 Dec. 2005.
- "Ethiopian opposition MPs elect acting representative in parliament", *Sudan Tribune*, 15 Dec. 2005.

➡ Ethiopia/Eritrea Situation along border remained volatile. Tensions exacerbated after Eritrea ordered UN mission (UNMEE) troops from Canada, Europe and U.S. to leave 7 December. UN Security Council announced temporary evacuation of 180 UNMEE staff after Eritrean President Afewerki refused to meet UNSG envoy seeking to negotiate settlement. UN confirmed Ethiopia had moved some troops back from border 23 December, but neither side fully complied with November UN resolution calling for de-escalation. International Claims Commission ruled Eritrea started 1998 war and liable for damages caused to Ethiopia.

- "Ruling: Eritrea broke international law in Ethiopia attack", CNN (Reuters), 21 Dec. 2005.
- "Ethiopia's PM says Eritrea girding for new war", *Sudan Tribune*, 14 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°68, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 24 Sept. 2003.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°101, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*, 22 December 2005. Key international actors need to urgently re-engage if a disastrous new war between Eritrea and Ethiopia is to be averted. At the heart of the dispute is the ruling of the independent Boundary Commission, which assigned the border town of Badme to Eritrea, with Ethiopia refusing to accept that ruling, at least without a prior dialogue - in which Eritrea refuses to engage. Those who helped put together the Algiers peace accords in 2000 need to urgently put together a "3-Ds" strategy, involving concurrent de-escalation, demarcation and dialogue. The stakes could hardly be higher: neither side appears eager for a second war, but the situation is very fragile, and to dismiss current tensions as mere sabre rattling would be a serious mistake.



➡ Somalia Mogadishu-based faction of transitional government established new regional council to govern capital, further widening split with Jowhar-based government led by President Yusuf. International observers warned against lifting arms embargo on Somalia, following November calls from IGAD regional authority to repeal ban so as to allow Jowhar government to arm security forces. UN appealed to donors for \$174 million in aid for 2006, as civil unrest, assassinations and piracy hampering humanitarian access.

- "New administration installed in Somali capital", CNN (AP), 25 Dec. 2005.
- "A state of utter failure", *The Economist*, 14 Dec. 2005.
- "Somalia: Arms Embargo Must Remain", Crisis Group media release, 13 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°95, *Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?*, 11 July 2005.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°100, *Somalia's Islamists*, 12 December 2005. The international community will only succeed in countering the threat of jihadi Islamism in Somalia if it addresses the...



...real needs of the country: restoring peace and essential services, and helping Somalis establish a broadly inclusive government of national unity. Otherwise, international actors may continue to score victories in their battles against terrorism in the Horn while losing the wider war. Since the collapse of the government in 1991, there has been a rise in Islamist reformist movements, the majority of which are non-violent and opposed to ideological extremism. In fact, Islamist extremism has not become more widespread because of Somali resistance, not foreign counter terrorism efforts. International actors should therefore make clear that their counter terrorism efforts are aimed at a handful of criminals - many of them foreigners - not the Somali population at large.

➡ Somaliland (Somalia) Upper house of parliament endorsed opposition-backed speaker, whose 1 December election sparked brawl among legislators; urged President Kahin to accept decision. Somaliland and Puntland exchanged detainees captured during 2004 clashes over disputed Sool region.

- "Somaliland, Puntland exchange detainees", IRIN, 7 Dec. 2005.
- "Elders urge compromise in parliamentary rift", Independent Online, 5 Dec. 2005.

➡ Sudan Situation in Darfur became increasingly hostile to humanitarian efforts. AU-sponsored peace talks, which resumed end November after Darfur rebels agreed to present unified front, showed little substantive progress. UN grounded aid flights and evacuated workers in response to government-backed militia and Sudanese army attacks in western and southern Darfur that displaced 7,000 Darfuris; rebels killed 20 in retaliatory attacks. Clashes between Arab nomad communities over local resources killed 60, adding to Darfur insecurity. Tensions increased with Chad, which accused Sudan of supporting Chadian rebels' attack on its security forces near border. International Criminal Court Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo proceeded with investigation into Darfur atrocities, despite ban by Sudanese government from entering region. Southern Sudan constitution signed into law 5 December in important step for implementation of January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

- "UN warns of growing catastrophe in Sudan", *Sudan Tribune (Financial Times)*, 31 Dec. 2005.
- "Darfur negotiators meet on row over power, wealth sharing", *Sudan Tribune*, 9 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°99, *The EU/AU Partnership in Darfur: Not Yet a Winning Combination*, 25 Oct. 2005; and Briefing N°32, *Unifying Darfur's Rebels: A Prerequisite for Peace*, 6 Oct. 2005.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

➡ Angola Forced removal of residents from Luanda's Cambamba suburbs raised concern of imminent land conflict.

- "Peace raises fear of increased land conflict", IRIN, 19 Dec. 2005.

➡ Swaziland Police arrested 13 members of Peoples United Democratic Movement in connection to arson attacks on government property; 12 subsequently charged with treason.

- "Swaziland charges 12 with treason after bombings", AlertNet, 30 Dec. 2005.

- ↳ Zimbabwe Opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) moved towards permanent split, as rival factions fought court battle over party assets, including "MDC" name. MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai dismissed attempt to expel him by disciplinary committee largely controlled by his critics. Meanwhile, ruling Zanu-PF continued repressive tactics. Supporters of newly-formed "third way" opposition movement, United Peoples' Movement, assaulted by pro-Zanu-PF crowd and had passports seized. "Operation Siyapambili" (No Going Back) launched to prevent evictees of "Murambatsvina" returning to homes. Harassment of media continued with raid on unlicensed independent radio station, Voice of the People. UN Humanitarian Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland described country's food/housing situation as in "meltdown".
- ["Zimbabwe opposition leader seen surviving party feud"](#), Reuters, 29 Dec. 2005.
 - ["Internal battle tangles Mugabe's opposition"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°97, ["Zimbabwe's Operation Murambatsvina: The Tipping Point?"](#), 17 Aug. 2005.

WEST AFRICA

- ↳ Côte d'Ivoire Political deadlock broken as Charles Konan Banny, president of Central Bank of Western African States, named interim PM by African mediators 4 December; appointment accepted by all parties including President Gbagbo and Forces Nouvelles rebels. Banny named cross-faction cabinet 28 December, but pro-Gbagbo militants protested against portfolio distribution. Banny retained sensitive communications and finance dossiers to ensure full prime ministerial powers as defined in UNSC resolution 1633. New UNSC resolution 1643 banned rough diamond exports, renewed arms embargo and threat of targeted sanctions against any individual interfering with peace process. Parliament's mandate extended to 2006 by constitutional court. Unidentified gunmen attacked Abidjan military bases 2 January, as *CrisisWatch* went to press. Government reportedly established control within hours.
- ["Ivory Coast troops recapture base after attack"](#), AlertNet, 2 Jan. 2006.
 - ["New government announced after weeks of haggling"](#), IRIN, 29 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°33, ["Côte d'Ivoire: Halfway Measures Will Not Suffice"](#), 12 Oct. 2005.
- ↳ Guinea Low turnout in 18 December municipal elections. Ruling Party for Unity and Progress maintained dominance with 31 of 38 mayorships, 241 of 303 community councils; opposition alleged fraud and detention of more than 50 supporters during clashes with security forces. Observers said poll essentially peaceful and orderly despite isolated incidents and procedural problems.
- ["Ruling party wins landslide in pivotal local elections"](#), IRIN, 28 Dec. 2005.
 - ["Guinea holds dozens in post-vote clashes-opposition"](#), AlertNet, 21 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°94, ["Stopping Guinea's Slide"](#), 14 June 2005.
- ↳ Guinea-Bissau UN Security Council agreed to revise and renew mandate of UN Peacebuilding Support Office until 31 December 2006; urged all parties to respect forthcoming Supreme Court ruling on presidential nomination. Tensions

continued between President Vieira and PAIGC, main party in parliament, over nomination of PM Aristides Gomes, which PAIGC insists requires parliamentary approval.

- ["Guinea-Bissau parties must stay committed to rule of law, Security Council says"](#), UN News, 14 Dec. 2005.
- ↳ Liberia Defeated presidential candidate George Weah dropped legal challenge to official results of November vote. Weah had claimed presidency - sparking Monrovia riots - despite electoral commission affirmation of results. President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf met international and U.S. officials including U.S. Sec. State Rice and UNSG Annan on U.S. visit. UN Security Council extended ban on diamond and timber exports, arms embargo and targeted travel restrictions; set next review for June 2006.
- ["War is over, but the rebuilding has barely begun"](#), IRIN, 23 Dec. 2005.
 - ["An architecture of instability"](#), Global Witness, Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°98, ["Liberia's Elections: Necessary but Not Sufficient"](#), 7 Sept. 2005.
- ↳ Nigeria Vice President Atiku Abubakar denied rumours of involvement in coup plot. Bayelsa state Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha impeached and arrested 9 December. Government pledged to hand him over to UK for prosecution on money laundering charges. In southeast, 2-day general strike called by Biafran separatist group MASSOB to protest detention of leader Ralph Uwazurike charged with treason, and demand independence; at least 10 killed in clashes with police. Oil pipeline explosion in southern delta killed 11; previously unknown Martyrs' Brigade claimed responsibility. Security forces put on high alert, subsequent series of pipeline fires treated as attacks. At least 35 killed in dispute between rival herders on Nigeria-Niger border 16 December. President Obasanjo blamed aviation sector corruption after second major air disaster in 2 months killed 107. 3 airlines grounded.
- ["Oil riches bring blood to Nigerian villagers"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Jan. 2006.
 - ["Nigeria suspects new pipeline attack in oil delta"](#), Reuters, 29 Dec. 2005.
 - ["Slowdown as Biafra separatists call strike"](#), IRIN, 5 Dec. 2005.
- ↳ Sierra Leone UNAMSIL 5-year mission ended with departure of last peacekeepers 15 December. Opposition leader Charles Margai arrested 7 December on conspiracy charges in connection with November harassment of Vice President Berewa by Margai supporters. Situation remained tense amidst threats of violence from Margai supporters as hearing adjourned until 12 January.
- ["Fears, some tears as blue helmets quit Sierra Leone"](#), AlertNet, 29 Dec. 2005.
 - ["Politician's bid to form rival party makes waves"](#), IRIN, 9 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, ["Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States"](#), 8 Dec. 2004.
- ↳ Togo EU postponed mission to Lome to evaluate progress on democratic governance and respect for human rights, citing need for progress in political dialogue before any evaluation. UNHCR said more than 19,000 refugees from Togo still in exile after April 2005 violence.
- ["Some refugees return, but 19,000 remain"](#), IRIN, 14 Dec. 2005.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

- Kazakhstan President Nazarbaev reelected 4 December with 91.5% of vote, but opposition claimed fraud and OSCE observers said vote failed to meet international standards. Supreme Court upheld official refusal to register opposition party Naghyz Ak Zhol. Former leader of opposition Democratic Choice for Kazakhstan party, Ghalymzhan Zhaqiyanov, granted early release from jail. 3 Kazakh opposition activists arrested in Kyrgyzstan; 1 extradited at Kazakhstan's request.
 - "Kazak opposition claims mass violations", IWPR, 11 Dec. 2005.
 - "Nazarbaev landslide buries future problems", RFE/RL, 6 Dec. 2005.
- Kyrgyzstan First cabinet since March revolution sworn in 20 December. President Bakiev announced referendum in 2006 to decide on structure of political system. 19 December local elections generally calm though some results disputed. Bakiev fired acting governor of Osh Oblast, who had publicly criticised government. Explosion 24 December in Osh government building officially blamed on "terrorists". Bishkek announced plans to privatise 2 newspapers in effort to relax controls over media. Increasing concerns 4 Uzbek refugees detained in Osh might be extradited to Uzbekistan.
 - "Kyrgyzstan's clannish voters", IWPR, 23 Dec. 2005.
 - "Poll on Kyrgyz political system", BBC, 21 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°97, *Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution*, 4 May 2005.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°109, *Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State*, 16 December 2005. The ouster of President Akayev in March raised hopes for change, but the months since the revolution have been marked by uncertainty and paralysis. The new government of President Bakiyev has a unique opportunity to win the trust of its citizens, to show that 24 March was indeed a revolution, not a mere reshuffling of ruling elites, but it does not have unlimited time. Most importantly, it must tackle the underlying issues behind the country's many conflicts by committing itself to transparency, fighting corruption and developing the rule of law. If Kyrgyzstan is not to become a failed state, the U.S., EU and other donors must also give the shaky government more political and financial backing.

- Tajikistan Opposition Islamic Renaissance Party announced plan to field candidate in November 2006 presidential election. France's defence minister met President Rakhmonov to discuss continued presence of French troops at Dushanbe base. 8 alleged members of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan arrested in north.
 - "2005 in review: The geopolitical game in Central Asia", RFE/RL, 29 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.
- Turkmenistan Parliament passed law granting President Niyazov direct control over vital oil and gas sector. Niyazov appointed Gurbanmyrat Atayev new energy minister;

announced will head government body to tackle bribery in sector and abolished state company Turkmenneftegaz, dividing oil and natural gas sales between Turkmenbashi refinery complex and state-controlled Turkmengaz.

- "Turkmen president takes direct control of energy sector", RFE/RL, 7 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, *Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy*, 4 Nov. 2004.
- Uzbekistan Series of trials held in connection with May Andijon violence: 100 sentenced to 10-22-year prison terms. Supreme Court tried 36 members of security forces on charges of "neglect", but most sentenced to maximum 3 years. Andijon survivors filed case against Internal Affairs Minister Almatov for crimes against humanity in Germany, where he received medical treatment before returning to Uzbekistan and resigning. Former deputy head of security service Anvar Solihboev to replace Almatov. Uzbekistan said German troops could continue to use Termez airbase. Security forces arrested Nodira Khidayatova, senior Sunshine Coalition member and outspoken opponent of President Karimov on charges of embezzlement, tax evasion and money laundering.
 - "19 soldiers, 5 policemen convicted over Uzbekistan unrest", *Daily Times*, 25 Dec. 2005.
 - "Germany: Uzbek security chief accused of crimes against humanity", Human Rights Watch, 15 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°38, *Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising*, 25 May 2005.

SOUTH ASIA

- Afghanistan Newly elected parliament, first in 30 years, held inaugural session 19 December: members of Wolesi and Meshrano Jirgas (lower and upper houses) sworn in by President Karzai. Former Shura-yi Nazar member and Karzai rival, Younus Qanooni, elected head of Wolesi Jirga with Karzai appointee Sebghatullah Mujaddedi leading Meshrano Jirga. NATO announced intention to send additional 6,000 peacekeeping troops to south in 2006, mainly Canadian and UK troops with Dutch commitment still being debated. Washington expected to withdraw 2,500 troops from Operation Enduring Freedom in area. UNSG Annan appointed German peacekeeping official Tom Koenigs as Special Representative to replace Jean Arnault early 2006.
 - "Nato's Afghanistan troop dilemma", BBC, 26 Dec. 2005.
 - "Armed and dangerous: Taliban gear up", Asia Times Online, 22 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°107, *Rebuilding the Afghan State: The European Union's Role*, 30 Nov. 2005.
- Bangladesh Wave of suicide bombings that began in November continued to escalate tensions: over 11 killed, including 8 in northern Netrokona town 8 December. Police carried out raids, seizing explosives and arresting key personnel of banned groups Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh. Opponents of minority Muslim Ahmadiyya community clashed with police during Dhaka march 23 December.
 - "JMB military commander Sunny held", *Daily Star*, 15 Dec. 2005.
 - "Bangladesh suicide-bomber kills six people", Forbes (AP), 8 Dec. 2005.

India (non-Kashmir) Military launched operation with “shoot-on-sight” policy in northeastern Assam state to quell escalating violence between Karbi and Dimasa ethnic groups. 40 tribal militants attacked Dimasa village 28 December; clash with police ensued, killing Karbi militant. Second round of peace talks between United Liberation Front of Asom and government due to start early January. Security forces reportedly killed 4 United National Liberation Front rebels during 27 December raid; police officer killed in apparent retaliatory attack. Maoists announced plans to target companies and to arm tribals along “red corridor”, from Nepal to south. Train between Andhra Pradesh and Orissa reportedly attacked by Maoists 25 December, killing 4 police.

- [“India rebels kill police officer”](#), BBC, 31 Dec. 2005.
- [“Don’t waver on peace talks: ULFA mediator Goswami”](#), New Kerala, 20 Dec. 2005.

Kashmir Latest confidence-building measure, “Punjab Express” bus between Lahore and Amritsar, introduced 11 December. Next round of official-level talks to discuss peace and security issues, including Kashmir, due January. Violence continued with 9 killed in clashes near Srinagar 14 December and Rajouri district of Jammu 16 December.

- [“Soldiers ‘kill Kashmir militants’”](#), BBC, 14 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°79, [India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps toward Peace](#), 24 June 2004.

Nepal Fears as *CrisisWatch* went to press that Maoists’ 2 January announcement ending unilateral ceasefire could lead to escalated fighting. Maoists said move response to government’s refusal to reciprocate and enter serious talks. King Gyanendra reshuffled cabinet for third time since seizing direct power in February. Thousands defied ban on protests, called on king to give up absolute power. Alliance of 7 main political parties called for general strike in Kathmandu to protest 16 December killing of 12 civilians by soldier in Nagarkot town and vowed, along with Maoists, to disrupt municipal elections due 8 February 2006. UNSG Annan repeated call for bilateral ceasefire and offer of UN assistance in peace process; EU presidency supported call.

- [“Maoists withdraw ceasefire”](#), Nepalnews, 2 Jan. 2006.
- [“75 killed during unilateral ceasefire: Report”](#), Kantipur Online, 23 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°106, [Nepal’s New Alliance: The Mainstream Parties and the Maoists](#), 28 Nov. 2005.

Pakistan Violence escalated in Waziristan tribal area and Balochistan province. In South Waziristan 12 killed by market bomb in Jandola while 22 killed in separate clashes between Islamist students and bandits in neighbouring North Waziristan. Balochistan unrest worsened as insurgents attacked railway line, fired rockets at government buildings and blew up bridge in response to military operation launched 18 December; unconfirmed reports of heavy casualties. Madrasa leaders rejected government deadline to expel foreign students from religious schools by year-end.

- [“Opposition calls for end to Balochistan crackdown”](#), Dawn, 27 Dec. 2005.
- [“Violence grows in Pakistan’s tribal zone, despite army presence”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°43, [Pakistan’s Local Polls: Shoring Up Military Rule](#), 22 Nov. 2005.

Sri Lanka Surge in violence in north and east raised fears of return to full-scale civil war: at least 46 killed, including 26 soldiers in 3 separate Jaffna landmine blasts, 13 sailors in ambush in northwest, and pro-rebel MP at Christmas mass in Batticaloa. Military delayed retaliation against LTTE assault, hoping condemnation by foreign donors will pressure Tigers into returning to ceasefire. In policy shift, newly elected President Rajapakse invited Norway to continue observer role. Government formally invited Tigers to restart peace talks and agreed to LTTE demand talks be held overseas; Japan offered to host. Over 900 detained by police in 31 December security sweep of capital in search for suicide bombers.

- [“Hundreds detained in Sri Lanka”](#), BBC, 31 Dec. 2005.
- [“Sri Lanka’s Tigers on the loose”](#), *Economist*, 29 Dec. 2005.
- [“Sri Lanka conflict goes ‘from bad to worse’”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 27 Dec. 2005.

NORTH EAST ASIA

Crisis Group Asia Report N°108, [North East Asia’s Undercurrents of Conflict](#), 15 December 2005. Simmering tensions between China, Japan and South Korea risk boiling over unless these countries embrace confidence- and institution-building measures and leave history disputes to scholars. To keep relatively minor incidents from threatening progress on critical security and economic challenges, they, and the U.S. should refrain from unilateral military exercises in disputed areas, increase military-to-military exchanges and establish joint institutions to address specific political and security problems. Moreover, Tokyo should financially assist war crimes victims; South Korea should conclude an agreement with Japan on allowable fish catches in the area around Tokdo/Takeshima; and China should publicly acknowledge Japan’s role in its economic development. Taking these steps would go a long way toward reducing tensions and allowing these countries to focus on more important issues like resolving the North Korean nuclear threat, meeting energy needs and preparing for future environmental disasters.



China (internal) Rural unrest worsened as police opened fire on rioters in Guangdong province protesting land seizures for state projects; villagers claimed 20 killed. Trial began over similar June incident in Hebei province. UN rapporteur on torture accused officials of interfering with his investigation; stated torture in prisons widespread but in decline.

- [“In rural China, a time bomb is ticking”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Jan. 2006.
- [“A demo turns bloody”](#), *The Economist*, 14 Dec. 2005.

North Korea Nuclear negotiations returned to impasse, erasing 5 months of apparent progress. Pyongyang announced intention to resume work on 2 light-water reactors previously developed under now defunct Agreed Framework and abandoned multinational KEDO project to provide reactors in exchange for freeze on weapons programs. New U.S. ambassador to South publicly labelled North “criminal regime”. UN General Assembly adopted first-ever resolution condemning NK’s widespread human rights violations.

- [“N Korea to resume nuclear plans”](#), BBC, 20 Dec. 2005.
- [“A more assertive role for China”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°87, [North Korea: Where Next for the Nuclear Talks?](#), 15 Nov. 2004.

- Taiwan Strait Ruling DPP suffered major defeat in 3 December local elections. Opposition Kuomintang, with policy of dialogue with China, won 14 posts in 23 constituencies including key Taipei county. Setback for DPP likely to trigger major structural changes ahead of 2008 presidential poll. President Chen Shui-bian called for increased arms purchases and warned against greater economic ties to mainland.
 - "President of Taiwan hardens China line", *International Herald Tribune*, 1 Jan. 2006.
 - "Taiwan opposition wins key poll", BBC, 3 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, *China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente*, 21 Sept. 2005.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

- Indonesia Aceh peace process continued smoothly but major hurdles on horizon while bloodshed continued in Central Sulawesi. Final phase of 24,000 non-local troop withdrawal from Aceh began 20 December, while former rebels handed over last of weapons. GAM announced its Acehese National Army to be dissolved and replaced with non-military committee designed to oversee GAM's transformation into political movement. Move greeted with scepticism by Indonesian military, which announced plan to send 15 engineering battalions to help with reconstruction; GAM expected to protest to Aceh Monitoring Mission. At least 7 killed by bomb in predominantly Christian market in Palu, Central Sulawesi, 31 December. Attack came after plans to execute Florinese Catholic and 2 others for role in May 2000 massacre of over 100 Muslims, raised concerns of renewed unrest.
 - "Bomb blast at Christian market kills 7 in Indonesia", AlertNet, 31 Dec. 2005.
 - "Aceh marks final troop withdrawal", BBC, 29 Dec. 2005.
 - Comment by Gareth Evans (Crisis Group), "Aceh is building peace from its ruins", *International Herald Tribune*, 23 Dec. 2005.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°44, *Aceh: So Far, So Good*, 13 December 2005.



The Aceh peace process has exceeded expectations thus far - a credit to the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) - but it has now entered a critical stage. Since the peace agreement between the government and GAM guerrillas was signed in Helsinki on 15 August 2005, both have shown strong political will to keep the process moving, assisted by the EU-led Aceh Monitoring Mission. There are two key hurdles to overcome. The first is reintegration of former GAM members into civilian life; the second is the legal process of incorporating the agreement's provisions into a new law to be adopted by Indonesia's parliament. Since wiser heads have prevailed every time a potential obstacle has arisen, there is every reason to believe a way will be found around these problems, too.

- Myanmar/Burma Association of South East Asian (ASEAN) leaders criticised ruling military junta for lack of democratic reforms and called for movement on "roadmap for democracy", as well as status of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Convention to draft constitution resumed 5 December. Military reportedly launched offensive in west against faction of Indian Nagaland separatists, while clashes between ethnic Karenni rebels and military reportedly continued. French contingent of Médecins Sans Frontières to withdraw because of restrictions imposed on staff. Bizarre plan

to move capital to central town of Pinyinmana 300 km north of Yangon made rapid progress.

- "As scrutiny grows, Burma moves its capital", *The Washington Post*, 28 Dec. 2005.
- "Myanmar gets stern warning from Asean", *International Herald Tribune*, 9 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°34, *Myanmar: Update on HIV/AIDS Policy*, 16 Dec. 2004.

- Philippines Former Defence Secretary General Fortunato Abat arrested on sedition charges after proclaiming himself leader of new revolutionary government. Intelligence officials claimed capture of Pio de Vera, alleged number 2 of radical Muslim Rajah Solaiman Movement, averted Christmas attacks in Manila. Clashes between Communist New People's Army rebels and soldiers continued on Mindanao. Fighting continued on southwestern island of Jolo.

- "Peace proves elusive in the Philippines", *The Nation*, 21 Dec. 2005.
- "Philippines 'coup general' held", BBC, 15 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°80, *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 13 July 2004.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, *Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts*, 19 December 2005. A small minority of militant Muslim converts in the Philippines is complicating efforts to fight terrorism and make peace in Mindanao, but government practices too often play into militant hands by subordinating procedural justice to careless counter-terror measures. The Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM), a terrorist group with ties to Abu Sayyaf Group and foreign jihadists, emerged in 2002 from a loose association of converts who call themselves Balik-Islam. Even after the arrest of its leader in October, RSM remains a vehicle for more experienced terrorist groups based in Mindanao to reach the Philippines' urban heartland. Perceived injustices of Manila's urban counter-terror campaign serve as a recruiting tool, so is it critically important for the Philippines government to get the balance between human rights and security right.



- Thailand Violence in south, temporarily suspended by severe flooding, resumed with 5 fatal shootings in Narathiwat and Yala provinces late December; 2 Muslim men killed earlier in month. Bomb exploded in Narathiwat 24 December during PM Shinawatra's visit to region after floods. Police exchanged 2 detainees for 22 school teachers taken hostage by villagers 19 December. Malaysian authorities handed senior New Pattani United Liberation Organisation leader to Thai police.
 - "String of killings in far South", *The Nation*, 26 Dec. 2005.
 - "Groups seek end of Thai militant blacklist", *The Guardian*, 18 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°105, *Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution*, 18 Nov. 2005.

Europe

BALKANS

- Albania Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu said Albania hoped to join NATO in 2008. Bomb damaged Tirana offices of newspaper *Shekulli* 18 December.

- [“Bomb attack on country’s biggest independent daily paper”](#), Reporters without Borders, 19 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, [Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?](#), 25 Feb. 2004.

➤ Bosnia & Herzegovina Former German minister Christian Schwarz-Schilling appointed next - and likely last - High Representative 14 December; expected to take up post end January 2006. Bosnia’s special war crimes court charged 11 over 1995 Srebrenica massacre. Radovan Stankovic, first suspect to be transferred from Hague tribunal to Bosnian court, refused to recognise legality of latter. 5 members of Scorpions paramilitary group on trial in Serbia for Srebrenica crimes.

- [“Representative of change”](#), Transitions Online, 19 Dec. 2005.
- [“Bosnia gets new High Representative”](#), ISN, 15 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°164, [Bosnia’s Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU](#), 6 Sept. 2005.

➤ Croatia Ante Gotovina, Croatian general accused of war crimes against Serb civilians in Krajina in August 1995, arrested in Spain 7 December and transferred to Hague war crimes tribunal. 40,000 supporters rallied in Split in protest.

- [“Scorpions on trial in Croatia, Serbia”](#), ISN, 30 Dec. 2005.
- [“Croatian fugitive general seized”](#), BBC, 8 Dec. 2005.

➤ Kosovo UN Special Envoy Marti Ahtisaari reported to UNSG Annan in New York 19 December concluding first phase of contacts with regional actors; said talks planned for January should first focus on decentralisation. Report by EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana and Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn recommended increased EU involvement after status talks, including potentially central policing role. UNMIK authorised establishment of justice and interior ministries, seen as important steps in building state capacity in province. Retired Ambassador Frank Wisner appointed U.S. envoy for status talks. Security stepped up after several incidents, including grenade attack on bus near Prizren 4 December and reported shootings in Mitrovica end of month.

- [“EU considers key role in Kosovo”](#), BBC, 12 Dec. 2005.
- [“Comment: Tough road ahead for Kosovo talks”](#), BIRN, 2 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°165, [Bridging Kosovo’s Mitrovica Divide](#), 13 Sept. 2005.

➤ Macedonia EU granted Macedonia candidate status at Brussels Summit but no accession talks start date given.

- [“Pride and relief”](#), Transitions Online, 19 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°37, [Macedonia: Not out of the Woods Yet](#), 25 Feb. 2005.

➤ Serbia & Montenegro 5 members of Scorpions paramilitary group who filmed their execution of 6 Bosniaks in Srebrenica in 1995 went on trial before Belgrade war crimes court 20 December. Earlier court sentenced 14 for 1991 war crimes against Croats in Vukovar, first verdict since 2003 inauguration. Venice Commission’s 19 December report found Montenegro’s referendum law in line with international standards, called for dialogue between government and opposition on referendum standards. EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana appointed Czech Miroslav Lajcak representative to facilitate dialogue.

- [“This way out?”](#), Transitions Online, 22 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°39, [Serbia: Spinning its Wheels](#), 23 May 2005.

Crisis Group Europe Report N°169, [Montenegro’s Independence Drive](#), 7 December 2005. Montenegro should decide on its own terms and timeline whether to hold a referendum on independence, which it is entitled to do in April 2006 under the terms by which it entered the State Union with Serbia. Resolving Montenegro’s situation will enhance, not undermine, the region’s stability and will not affect the international process underway to determine Kosovo’s final status. The EU should encourage peaceful opposition participation in the process and make clear that if Montenegro chooses to leave the State Union it will accept the outcome. Should Montenegro choose independence - likely but by no means certain - the EU should stand ready to offer assistance to both Montenegro and Serbia.



CAUCASUS

➤ Armenia Opposition continued to protest 27 November referendum results alleging fraud and detention of protestors by police. FM Oskanian attended Brussels political dialogue meetings, alongside Azerbaijani and Georgian counterparts. U.S. indicated newly approved 5-year \$236 million grant conditional on government action regarding alleged referendum fraud and political reform.

- [“Armenian opposition seeks to regroup after constitutional referendum setback”](#), EurasiaNet, 15 Dec. 2005.
- [“Sponsoring without monitoring?”](#), Transitions Online, 13 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, [Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead](#), 18 Oct. 2004.

➤ Azerbaijan Controversy continued over November election. Constitutional court approved official results 1 December, same day as EU called for investigation into security forces violence against opposition demonstration 26 November. New parliament, boycotted by opposition, convened 2 December and elected speaker. Opposition continued to challenge results, police violently dispersed rally held 18 December. Date for election re-runs in 10 constituencies set for 13 May.

- [“Azerbaijani opposition charges US with ‘double standards’”](#), Eurasia Insight, 7 Dec. 2005.
- [“CoE rebukes Azerbaijan, US over poll”](#), ISN, 5 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°40, [Azerbaijan’s 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity](#), 21 Nov. 2005.

➤ Chechnya (Russia) Russian President Putin made surprise visit for opening of new parliament, in which Kremlin-backed Unified Russia party won 33 of 58 seats in November elections. Russian and Western rights activists accused EU of whitewashing reality with optimistic assessment of poll. Ramzan Kadyrov, first deputy PM, elected chief regional representative of Unified Russia.

- [“‘Little Stalin’ Kadyrov runs Russia’s Chechnya”](#), AlertNet, 20 Dec. 2005.
- [“Activists complain to EU over upbeat Chechnya note”](#), AlertNet, 8 Dec. 2005.

➤ Georgia Joint Control Commission met in Moscow 27-28 December amid tense security situation in South Ossetia conflict zone. Earlier South Ossetia’s de facto president Eduard Kokoity presented his peace proposals to Presidents Putin and Saakashvili, largely matching 3-stage plan proposed by Tbilisi and supported by OSCE. Despite frequent security incidents in Abkhazia’s Gali region, sides neared agreement over

documents providing for international guarantees on non-resumption of hostilities and return of internally displaced.

- "Georgia leader seeks talks", *International Herald Tribune*, 14 Dec. 2005.
- "EU: South Caucasus countries discuss 'frozen conflicts,' closer ties", RFE/RL, 13 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°38, *Georgia-South Ossetia: Refugee Return the Path to Peace*, 19 April 2005.

➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen travelled to Armenia and Azerbaijan 15-17 December; expressed optimism for 2006 settlement breakthrough. OSCE High Level Planning Group visited region for first time in 8 years. EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana offered greater EU involvement in settlement efforts after meeting with Armenian and Azerbaijani FM's; sides welcomed offer but said should focus on post-conflict reconstruction. Georgi Petrosian, former NK hardline leader, appointed new de facto NK foreign minister.

- "EU offers to help solve Armenia-Azerbaijan dispute", AlertNet, 13 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace*, 11 Oct. 2005.

➤ North Caucasus (Russia) Low-level violence continued, including 29 December suicide attack in Makhachkala thought to be aimed at mourners of officer killed 2 days earlier. In Kabardino-Balkariya, 59 reportedly arrested in ongoing investigation into October raid on Nalchik; suspects' lawyers accused police of torture. Russian prosecutors' report into 2004 Beslan school siege cleared security forces of blame, in contrast to earlier local parliamentary commission report.

- "Russian prosecutors defend security forces in Beslan school siege", *Boston Globe*, 28 Dec. 2005.
- "Anger drives Muslim insurgents in Russia's south", AlertNet, 7 Dec. 2005.
- "Russian lawyers say Nalchik detainees tortured", RFE/RL, 5 Dec. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Belarus Civil rights further deteriorated as parliament passed changes to criminal code to curb dissent ahead of 2006 elections, making it illegal to discredit standing of Belarus abroad and to train people to take part in street protests. Move criticised by OSCE, EU, U.S. and UN. Parliament voted to hold presidential election in March 2006.

- "Where do we go from here?", RFE/RL, 19 Dec. 2005.
- "Belarus tightens up protest laws", BBC, 2 Dec. 2005.

➤ Moldova Elections for Transnistria's parliament held 11 December resulting in 23 seats for Renewal movement, 20 for Republic movement: both pro-President Igor Smirnov. Moldova, EU and U.S. did not recognise poll. 5-6 December OSCE Ljubljana Summit declaration blocked after dispute over wording regarding Russian troop presence in Moldova. U.S. Under Sec. State Burns stated no arms treaty with Russia possible while Russian troops remain in Moldova and Georgia.

- "Trans-Dniester pins hopes on vote", BBC, 11 Dec. 2005.
- "OSCE: Final text nixed after dispute on Russian troops in Moldova", RFE/RL, 6 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, *Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transnistria*, 17 June 2004.

➤ Ukraine Relations with Russia soured by ongoing dispute over gas prices. Moscow cut supply to Ukraine 1 January after negotiations failed to resolve dispute over price rise by Russian supplier Gazprom, perceived as response to Ukraine's pro-Western stance. Pro-Russian opposition held rally to protest Ukraine's goal of joining NATO and EU. In Kiev visit U.S. Sec. State Rice praised government, urged further reform.

- "Russia turns off the gas taps", *The Economist*, 2 Jan. 2006.
- "Ukraine revisits its somber past", *International Herald Tribune*, 8 Dec. 2005.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➤ Basque Country (Spain) Separatist group ETA exploded several bombs in Basque Country, on motorways around Madrid and in Navarre region causing damage but no injuries.

- "ETA claims 21 bomb attacks in Spain in 2 months", Reuters, 28 Dec. 2005.

➤ Cyprus UN Security Council authorised 14 December extension of UN mission to June 2006.

- "In Ankara, NATO chief urges Greek Cypriots to help end division of Cyprus", Southeast European Times, 20 Dec. 2005.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) "Stormontgate" spy scandal resurfaced. Sinn Fein (SF) expelled former Stormont Head of Administration Denis Donaldson after he announced he was British agent and claimed allegations of IRA spy ring which led to 2002 collapse of power-sharing had been "scam" invented by UK intelligence. Northern Ireland Sec. Peter Hain ruled out public inquiry. Senior police officers criticised new paramilitary fugitive legislation. In dramatic u-turn under pressure from rival nationalists, SF also rejected legislation saying too far from points agreed in 2001 talks.

- "London draws fire over Stormont spy scandal", ISN, 23 Dec. 2005.
- "Sinn Féin forced to backtrack on support for fugitive amnesty bill", *The Guardian*, 21 Dec. 2005.

➤ Turkey High profile court case against author Orhan Pamuk, accused of denigrating "Turkishness", adjourned until 7 February to allow justice ministry time to approve procedure. EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn warned trial test of freedom of expression and reforms; PM Erdogan accused EU of pressuring judiciary; government later suggested law might be changed. Prosecutors launched investigation into statements on army by Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Commission Co-Chair Joost Lagendijk. 4 soldiers, 2 PKK militants killed in clash in south eastern Sirnak province.

- "Turkey insult law 'may be dumped'", BBC, 28 Dec. 2005.
- "Turkey charges editor again", *International Herald Tribune*, 26 Dec. 2005.

Latin America / Caribbean

➤ Bolivia Evo Morales won historic victory in 18 December presidential election. First round poll, described by observers as "free and fair", gave Morales over required 50% of vote to become Bolivia's first indigenous head of state; turnout high. Morales' party Movement Toward Socialism won 65 of 157 seats in Lower House and Senate; will need to form alliances to pass new legislation.

- "Morales will have to prove his pragmatism", MercoPress, 21 Dec. 2005.
- "A champion of indigenous rights - and of state control of the economy", *The Economist*, 14 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°12, *Coca, Drugs and Social Protest in Bolivia and Peru*, 3 Mar. 2005.

Crisis Group Latin America Report N°15, *Bolivia at the Crossroads: The December Elections*, 8 December 2005. After the fall of two presidents in as many years, and intensifying social protest, Bolivia is verging on national disintegration. Unless the 18 December elections produce a new government committed to major reforms and national reconciliation, escalation of social and political conflict is a serious risk. While the elections are an opportunity to begin to tackle deep institutional issues, they are likely to bring their own problems. The leading presidential candidates, Evo Morales and Jorge Quirogo, personify the deep divides in the country. Neither is anticipated to win a majority in the election, which would leave the Congress - also to be chosen on 18 December - to decide the winner. Whatever the outcome, it may well be greeted by more and possibly violent protest. The international response, especially from the U.S. and Brazil, must be cautious and constructive.



- ↳ Colombia FARC carried out worst attack since Uribe elected, killing 37 in 2 attacks on security forces. Attacks came after government proposal for troop pullout from area in southwest in exchange for hostage/prisoner swap. Optimistic start to talks in Cuba between leftist ELN rebels and government, with commitment to further talks in January. AUC paramilitaries broke ceasefire with government in clash with ELN early December that killed 8. 2,000 more AUC members disarmed, raising total to 13,000; deadline for complete demobilisation of remaining 15,000 set for February. AUC leader called for 2 seats in Congress in return for disarming.
 - "Colombia's Uribe vows coca crackdown after attack", AlertNet, 28 Dec. 2005.
 - "Colombia, rebel group move closer to formal peace talks", CNN (Reuters), 21 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°14, *Colombia: Presidential Politics and Peace Prospects*, 16 June 2005.

- ↳ Ecuador Supreme Electoral Tribunal rejected President Palacio's request to hold referendum on constitutional reform. 15 ministers resigned after request denied; new cabinet, named 14 December, continued to seek support for referendum. Palacio wants public approval for total overhaul of political system in order to bypass congressional drive for more limited reforms.
 - "Referendum denial causes overhaul", Prensa Latina, 15 Dec. 2005.
 - "Ecuador abandons vote on reforms", BBC, 6 Dec. 2005.

- ↳ Haiti Presidential and parliamentary elections delayed at least until end January, as preparations remained incomplete. Visit by Dominican President Fernandez mid-month marred by violent protests against alleged abuse of Haitian migrants in Dominican Republic. 5 Supreme Court justices fired for ruling - against wishes of interim government - that Haitian-born U.S. millionaire Dumarsais Simeus could run in elections. 2 UN peacekeepers killed in separate incidents around volatile Cité Soleil slum.

- "Haiti election to be delayed again - officials", AlertNet, 30 Dec. 2005.
- "Dominican Republic demands apology from Haiti", CNN (Reuters), 14 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°9, *Haiti's Elections: The Case for a Short Delay*, 25 Nov. 2005.

- ↳ Peru Government declared state of emergency after Shining Path guerrillas killed 8 police 20 December in Huanuco region northeast of Lima; earlier guerrillas killed 5 police near southern town of San Francisco. Former army officer Ollanta Humala, leader of brief revolt against former president Fujimori in 2000, registered as Peruvian Nationalist Party candidate for 9 April presidential elections.
 - "Peru revolt leader to fight polls", BBC, 31 Dec. 2005.
 - "Peru declares state of emergency after rebel attack", AlertNet, 22 Dec. 2005.

- ↳ Venezuela President Hugo Chavez's supporters won all 167 seats in Congress after 5 opposition parties boycotted 4 December congressional elections. EU observers said poll fair and transparent, despite low voter turnout (25%) due to widespread distrust in electoral system.
 - "EU observers call Venezuelan vote fair", CNN, 6 Dec. 2005.
 - "Boycott ensures Chávez is winner in Venezuela", *International Herald Tribune*, 5 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°5, *Venezuela: Headed Toward Civil War?*, 10 May 2004.

Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- ↳ Israel/occupied Territories Internal Fatah divisions intensified after problematic party primaries prompted faction headed by imprisoned Marwan Barghouti to present separate electoral list for 25 January general elections. Dispute resolved by negotiations but split and popular dissatisfaction allowed hardline Hamas to win major West Bank cities in mid-December local elections. Increasing likelihood January elections will be postponed: EU foreign policy chief Solana threatened to halt aid if Hamas wins. U.S. Congress called for ban on Hamas participation, while Israel announced intention to prevent Palestinians in East Jerusalem from voting. Security situation in Gaza deteriorated at end of month: 200 Palestinian police stormed government offices in Rafah 2 January and earlier temporarily closed border crossing with Egypt to protest government failure to fight lawlessness. Israel imposed buffer zone in northern Gaza in response to rocket fire; launched air strikes after Islamic Jihad suicide bomb in Netanya 5 December killed 5. Former PM Binyamin Netanyahu elected new leader of Likud. PM Ariel Sharon briefly hospitalised for minor stroke.
 - "Political splits darken the Israeli-Palestinian future", *The Daily Star*, 31 Dec. 2005.
 - "Hamas seizes opening in Palestinian politics", *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°44, *The Jerusalem Powder Keg*, 2 Aug. 2005.

- Lebanon Anti-Syrian journalist and MP Gibran Tuani killed by car bomb 12 December, latest in series of political murders. Cabinet called for international probe into killings. In protest, 5 pro-Syrian Shiite ministers suspended participation in government, putting already fragile coalition in jeopardy. UN investigators presented second report into assassination of ex-PM Hariri, confirming Syrian officials key suspects. UN Security Council extended Hariri investigation by 6 months; asked UNSG Annan to look into expanding commission's mandate to investigate other attacks on top Lebanese officials.

 - "Lebanon's fragile coalition close to collapse", Middle East Online, 30 Dec. 2005.
 - "Letting down Lebanon at the United Nations", *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 April 2005.

Crisis Group Middle East Report N°48, *Lebanon: Managing the Gathering Storm*, 5 December 2005. The international community must put aside its own agendas and take steps to sustain Lebanon's fragile stability lest the country fall victim to deepening communal divisions or increased regional volatility. Lebanon has navigated Hariri's assassination, government crisis, elections and Syria's withdrawal but further shocks are inevitable. Outside actors tempted to use this period to further competing agendas do so at Lebanon's peril. The U.S. and EU should refrain from pressure to disarm Hizbollah and leave its status to Beirut's own decision-making. Lebanon should work with the UN to organise a third-country trial of Hariri assassination suspects if they include foreign nationals but it needs sustained calm and immunity from outside struggles to design and implement the economic, judicial and security reforms that will define its future. The focus of domestic and international actors should be on strengthening governing institutions to secure democratic transition.



- Jordan Islamist groups criticised new draft anti-terror law, saying attempt to control religion is wrong way to prevent future terrorist attacks. New government of PM Marouf Bakhit confirmed 20 December. Court sentenced Jordanian head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and 2 others to death in absentia for 2004 failed suicide bombing.

 - "Al-Zarqawi sentenced to death", CNN (AP), 18 Dec. 2005.
 - "Islamic groups oppose draft anti-terror law", IRIN, 7 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°47, *Jordan's 9/11: Dealing With Jihadi Islamism*, 23 Nov. 2005.
- Syria UN Security Council unanimously approved 6-month extension of inquiry into former Lebanese PM Hariri's murder, calling for Damascus' full cooperation. UN commission's report presented 12 December said top Syrian officials involved in killing. UN head investigator Mehlis accused Syria of using propaganda to discredit inquiry, after prominent witness recanted testimony end November and said he was bribed to testify against Syria. Former Sunni Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam, in exile in Paris, accused President Assad of threatening Hariri before his death. 8 Sunni militants killed in clashes with security forces near Aleppo early December.

 - "Syria's Assad threatened Hariri - Syrian ex-VP", AlertNet, 30 Dec. 2005.
 - "Syria wants ground rules for cooperation in UN probe", *The Daily Star*, 29 Dec. 2005.

- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, *Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria*, 12 April 2005.

GULF

- Bahrain Violent clashes as unemployed youths protested alleged abuse of activist by security forces. 9 human rights activists later sought safety in UN offices from "state terror".

 - "Bahraini activists seek UN protection", Al-Jazeera (AFP), 15 Dec. 2005.
- Iran President Ahmadi-Nejad further exacerbated poor relations with West by calling Holocaust a "myth". EU-3 representatives and Iran resumed preparatory nuclear talks in Vienna 21 December; Iran reaffirmed determination to pursue fully-fledged nuclear program. Tehran aiming to restart uranium enrichment following its rejection of compromise proposal by Moscow to have uranium enriched in Russia. Ahmadi-Nejad's fourth candidate for oil minister, Kazem Vaziri-Hamaneh, accepted by parliament.

 - "Iran rejects Russia nuclear plan", BBC, 1 Jan. 2006.
 - Comment by Karim Sadjadpour (Crisis Group) and Ray Takeyh, "Behind Iran's hard-line on Israel", *The Boston Globe*, 23 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°18, *Iran: What Does Ahmadi-Nejad's Victory Mean?*, 4 Aug. 2005.
- Iraq Elections held for first full 4-year parliamentary assembly in post-Baathist era 15 December: Sunni Arab participation a very positive development, but results feared unlikely to reduce sectarian politics and violence. Unlike previous election boycotts, Sunni groups urged voting to prevent government dominated by Shiites and Kurds. Turnout estimated at 70%; observers said vote generally met international standards. Several violent incidents reported but voting not seriously disrupted. United Iraqi Alliance, collection of Islamist Shiite groups, expected to win landslide victory: results expected early January. Sunni coalition Iraqi Accord Front (second with 18.6% preliminary results in Baghdad Province) claimed election in Baghdad rigged and demanded new vote. Severe insecurity continued: 11 members of Shiite family killed south of Baghdad in largely Sunni neighbourhood; 9 killed in attempted jailbreak by suspected insurgents; suicide bomber killed 4 policemen near interior ministry 29 December. 1,724 Coalition soldiers, including 1,606 Americans, and thousands of Iraqis killed by hostile fire since declared end of combat operations 1 May 2003.

 - "Shiites and Kurds mapping outreach to Sunnis", *International Herald Tribune*, 27 Dec. 2005.
 - "Iraq takes another step down a long, hard road", *The Economist*, 19 Dec. 2005.
 - Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°19, *Unmaking Iraq: A Constitutional Process Gone Awry*, 26 Sept. 2005.
- Saudi Arabia Security forces killed 2 militants suspected of fatal shootings of 5 policemen in northern province of Qassim.

 - "Two Saudi militants die after police shootout", AlertNet, 28 Dec. 2005.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°45, *The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia*, 19 Sept. 2005.
- Yemen Series of kidnappings throughout month: former German diplomat and family of 4 kidnapped and released in east; 2 Austrian tourists released in northern Mareb province; 5 Italians taken 1 January.

- "Yemen army besieges Italian hostage hideout", Middle East Online, 2 Jan. 2006.

NORTH AFRICA

Algeria Speculation over health of President Bouteflika after 3-week hospital stay in Paris. 2 rebels killed in clashes with security forces in southwest. 600 illegal migrants deported after authorities closed camp near Moroccan border.

- "Algeria's president leaves hospital", Al-Jazeera, 18 Dec. 2005.
- 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 Violence, arrests and reports police blocked access to polling stations marred final round of parliamentary elections: 12 killed, 130 injured in 7 December run-off vote. Ruling National Democratic Party won over 70% of parliamentary seats, while Muslim Brothers - despite official ban - won record 88 seats (19.7%). Runner-up in 2005 presidential election Ayman Nour sentenced to 5 years in jail for allegedly forging signatures to register opposition Ghad party. 23 killed as police stormed Sudanese refugee camp outside UN office to break up protest.

- "How Mubarak hijacked democracy", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Dec. 2005.

- "Egypt: Stormy elections close a turbulent year", *Arab Reform Bulletin*, December 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°46, *Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy*, 4 Oct. 2005.

Mauritania Junta chief Ely Ould Mohamed Vall announced pay raises for civil servants in bid to fight corruption; inaugurated independent electoral commission end November in preparation for March 2007 polls. AU urged Mauritania to allow refugee return from Mali and Senegal.

- "Junta announces anti-corruption pay hikes for civil servants", IRIN, 28 Dec. 2005.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°41, *Islamism in North Africa IV: The Islamist Challenge in Mauritania: Threat or Scapegoat?*, 11 May 2005.

Western Sahara Series of pro-independence protests throughout December led to numerous arrests. 14 Western Sahara human rights activists and Polisario Front sympathisers jailed for role in May riots.

- "Morocco jails W Sahara activists", Al-Jazeera (Reuters), 14 Dec. 2005.
- "The stalemate in North Africa", *The Washington Times*, 2 Dec. 2005.

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