

1 April 2007, N°44

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 some 130 staff members across five continents, who already report on nearly 60 of the situations listed here. Comments and suggestions can be sent to crisiswatch@crisisgroup.org.

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April 2007 Watchlist



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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

↳ Burundi Rifts deepened in ruling CNDD-FDD party as 22 MPs rallied behind Hussein Radjabu, boycotting their parliamentary party group over his dismissal as party chairman, although 6 later dropped out of boycott. Radjabu ally Imaculée Nahayo ousted as President of National Assembly; another ally, ex-Second Vice-President Marine Barampama, interrogated by intelligence services for 3 days on accusations of corruption. Radjabu sought to build coalition with FRODEBU and UPRONA to block CNDD-FDD legislation, but both voted with CNDD-FDD. Palipehutu-FNL rebels suspended their participation in Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism due to disagreements over talks agenda. Meeting between UN and government failed to agree on what mechanisms of transitional justice are needed. Government wants to control truth commission and process of granting amnesty.

- [“UN talks on Burundi truth commission fail”](#), AFP, 10 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°120, *Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk*, 30 Nov. 2006.

↳ Central African Republic Bombing and clashes between army, reportedly with French support, and Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) rebels in northern Birao town early March led to mass exodus from town.

- [“Thousands flee into Darfur after raid by French troops devastated ‘ghost town’”](#), *Independent*, 30 Mar. 2007.
- [“Northern town empty as scared civilians stay away”](#), IRIN 22 Mar, 2007.

↳ Democratic Republic of Congo Violence erupted in Kinshasa as opposition leader Jean-Pierre Bemba rejected 15 March ultimatum to integrate guards into national army. Reports of up to 600 killed in ensuing clashes 22-23 March, in which Angolan troops reportedly bolstered Kabila's forces. European diplomats condemned “premature use of force” before all paths of negotiation exhausted. Bemba, accused of treason, sought refuge at South African embassy and may leave for exile in Portugal. New government under PM Antoine Gizenga emphasised program to tackle corruption, increase transparency and reform security services. Security in east remained volatile. Local “mixage” integration process between dissident commander Laurent Nkunda and national army continued slowly. 5 integrated brigades now partially formed. Nkunda's demands for high-ranking positions, amnesty and return of Tutsi refugees remain unmet. Operations launched by Nkunda's troops against Rwandan FDLR rebels in North Kivu resulted in attacks against local population, killing 15. In Ituri, rebel leader Peter Karim sent 300 troops into integration camps. 4,000 remain in bush triggering MONUC threat to resume operations. Several Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu also agreed to join integration process.

- [“A deadly warning”](#), *Economist*, 29 Mar. 2007.
- [“EU diplomats condemn DR Congo over bloody Kinshasa crackdown”](#), AFP, 27 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°44, *Congo: Staying Engaged after the Elections*, 9 Jan. 2007.

↳ Rwanda Several mortars reportedly launched into Rwandan territory from FDLR bases in DR Congo 3 March: no casualties and officials to confront issue through bilateral talks. Signs of further rapprochement with Uganda after Kampala handed over 8 FDLR rebels 12 March. Regional security discussed at U.S.-backed Tripartite Plus meeting in Kigali 15 March.

- [“Govt, DRC in talks over bomb attacks”](#), *New Times*, 6 Mar. 2007.

↳ Uganda LRA and government publicly pledged to adhere to principles of expired ceasefire agreement and refrain from offensive operations. Most LRA commanders regrouped with leader Joseph Kony in DR Congo. Prospects for resumption of Juba peace talks, on hold since LRA withdrew January citing security concerns and questioning mediator's partiality, improved marginally after UN Special Envoy Joaquim Chissano toured region and met Kony. Chissano announced preliminary discussions for mid-April. Uganda's Internal Affairs Minister and chief mediator Rukhana Rugunda accompanied Chissano's second visit and held first face-to-face discussion with Kony 10 March. Ugandan troops reported killing over 30 Allied Democratic Forces rebels near DRC border 28 March.

- [“Next meeting with Uganda rebels expected mid-April”](#), Reuters, 23 Mar. 2007.
- [“Rugunda meets Kony”](#), *Monitor*, 11 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°41, *Peace in Northern Uganda?*, 13 Sept. 2006.

HORN OF AFRICA

↳ Chad N'Djamena said Sudanese warplanes bombed near eastern towns of Tenay and Bahai 22 March, killing several and violating non-aggression pact signed late February. UN Security Council considering options following Chad's February rejection of UN military force.

- [“Thousands of Chadian refugees flee to Darfur”](#), IRIN, 22 Mar. 2007.
- [“Further blow for Chad peace force”](#), BBC, 7 Mar. 2007.

↳ Ethiopia Ethiopian troops remained in Somalia, despite pronouncements and ceremonies to contrary. PM Meles Zenawi stated as soon as AU firmly established in Somalia, “we'll move out completely”. High Court adjourned its verdict on cases of jailed opposition leaders and journalists for third time.

- [“Court adjourns ruling for next week”](#), *Reporter*, 24 Mar. 2007.

↳ Ethiopia/Eritrea Asmara expelled head of UNMEE mine clearance team 20 March for “violations of Eritrean laws and regulations”. Increasing tension between Eritrea and international community, and Ethiopia's fostering of relationship with U.S. in particular, further polarizing the 2 countries.

- [“U.N. says Eritrea expels its demining chief”](#), Reuters, 21 Mar. 2007.

↳ Somalia Mogadishu in turmoil as fighting escalated. Over 30 killed in 2 days mid-March and bodies of Ethiopian soldiers dragged through streets. After attempt at truce, fighting erupted again 29 March in what ICRC said was heaviest in Mogadishu in 15 years. Former leader of Council of Somali Islamic Courts Aways said he considers AU peacekeepers enemies. Ugandan deployment as part of AU AMISOM mission began 6 March - approx. 1500 Ugandan troops now in Mogadishu. Kampala called for deployment of other peacekeeping troops:

Nigeria pledged to deploy 850 by mid-April; Ghana, Burundi and Malawi yet to give timeframe. President Yusuf continued to consolidate power of Darod clan, further polarizing Hawiye, particularly Habr Gedir Ayr sub-clan, leading to increased Hawiye support for ongoing insurgency in Mogadishu. Transitional Federal Government (TFG) announced intention 11 March to pacify the city in 30 days through forced disarmament. Yusuf announced broad National Reconciliation Conference to begin 16 April, but doubts persist over whether TFG will include Islamists as necessary to promote lasting unity and reconciliation.

- "Somalis cower as fighting rages", BBC, 31 Mar. 2007.
- "Power vacuum as factions fight", *East African*, 27 Mar. 2007.
- "Slipping backwards", *Economist*, 22 Mar. 2007.
- "Fighting erupts in Mogadishu as gov't collects illegal guns", IRIN, 21 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°45, *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 26 Jan. 2007.

↳ Sudan In 6 March letter to UNSG Ban Ki-moon, President Bashir backtracked on commitment to allow UN command and control for AU/UN hybrid force for Darfur. UK PM Blair and German Chancellor Merkel reiterated calls for tougher sanctions, including no-fly zone. Khartoum signed agreement with UN 28 March repeating unfulfilled promise made 3 years ago to take "fast track" measures to remove bureaucratic obstacles to aid work in Darfur. Sudan Liberation Movement faction of Minni Minawi (SLM/MM), sole signatory to May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement, clashed with police 24 March in Omdurman; 8 former rebels and 2 police killed; agreement at risk of collapse. SLM commander Abdel Shafee Jomaa Arabi and 3 others reportedly killed same day in south Darfur further threatening DPA. Khartoum rejected ICC process commenced in February (against state minister for humanitarian affairs, Ahmad Muhammad Harun, and militia/Janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb), saying its own justice system sufficient. First Vice-President and President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, announced all-Darfur conference scheduled for April in Juba; called on rebels to agree unified position in advance of talks.

- Comment by Chris Patten (Crisis Group Co-Chair), "Sudan's crimes against humanity need real EU action, not empty words", *Irish Times*, 28 Mar. 2007.
- "Sudanese president repeats rejection of U.N. peacekeepers in Darfur", AP, 28 Mar. 2007.
- Comment by Nadim Hasbani (Crisis Group), "About the Arab stance vis-à-vis Darfur", *Al-Hayat*, 21 Mar. 2007.
- Comment by Nick Grono (Crisis Group), "Darfur needs more than words", *European Voice*, 1 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°43, *Getting the UN into Darfur*, 12 Oct. 2006.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

↳ Angola Security cooperation deal signed with Zimbabwe, but Luanda denied reports of paramilitary police deployment to Harare to support crackdown there. It further denied reports Angolan troops supported DR Congo army during confrontations in Kinshasa that killed hundreds. In sign of renewed fighting in Cabinda, FLEC rebels claimed 12 army soldiers killed. President dos Santos, in power since 1979, said "natural candidate" for 2009 elections by MPLA party.

- "President likely to seek further term", *Daily Trust*, 28 March 2007.

↳ Lesotho Opposition parties staged parliamentary sit-in and 20,000 supporters gathered on Maseru streets 15 March, contesting results of February 2007 elections and legality of election deal between ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy and smaller NIP party. Opposition-led strike 18-19 March saw thousands stay away from work in Maseru. Government rejected calls to enter into dialogue with opposition, who vowed to continue active dissent.

- "Lesotho supports historic stayaway", *Mail & Guardian*, 25 Mar. 2007.
- "Lesotho opposition parties stage sit-in at parliament", *Mail & Guardian*, 15 Mar. 2007.

↳ Zimbabwe Situation critical after vicious crackdown on opposition and ruling ZANU-PF endorsed President Mugabe as candidate for 2008 election. Opposition MDC leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara and 50 others arrested at 11 March rally; Tsvangirai severely beaten while in custody. SADC convened extraordinary summit 28-29 March to discuss situation, issued statement of "solidarity" with President Mugabe and plans for mediation by South Africa President Mbeki; unclear how aggressively he will pursue role. Before SADC summit, Zambian President Mwanawasa had called country "sinking Titanic" and South Africa, traditionally reticent on internal disorder in Zimbabwe, noted signs of "meltdown".

- "Crisis Group Board Calls for New Zimbabwe Compact", 26 Mar. 2007.
- "West tries to unite Zanu-PF rebels to bring down Mugabe from within", *Guardian*, 26 Mar. 2007.
- "Mugabe faces threat from within", *Mail & Guardian*, 13 Mar. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°122, *Zimbabwe: An End to the Stalemate?*, 5 March 2007. The long political stalemate in Zimbabwe may be breaking at last, but regional intervention and continued Western pressure are needed to ensure a peaceful restoration of democracy. The crippling political situation could be solved through the retirement of President Robert Mugabe when his term ends in 2008 and a power-sharing deal to create a transitional government tasked with preparing a new constitution and holding elections by 2010. Targeted sanctions and isolation by the EU and the U.S. have helped and must continue. The Southern African Development Community should work as a mediator between the ruling party and the opposition.



WEST AFRICA

↳ Côte d'Ivoire Major breakthrough as New Forces rebel leader Guillaume Soro named PM by presidential decree 27 March. President Laurent Gbagbo and Soro signed new peace agreement 4 March providing for power sharing in transition period. Discussions between Gbagbo and Soro delegations resumed 15 March in Ouagadougou to define institutional framework for implementation of peace deal and modalities of power sharing. ECOWAS, AU and UN Security Council endorsed peace agreement, and AU Peace and Security Council recommended (to UNSC) gradual withdrawal of international forces, as requested in accord.

- "UN endorses peace plan but troops will remain", IRIN, 29 Mar. 2007.
- "Carving up the country", *Economist*, 8 Mar. 2007.

- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°40, *Côte d'Ivoire: Stepping Up the Pressure*, 7 Sept. 2006.

🏠 Guinea Newly appointed PM Lansana Kouyaté announced new "broad consensus" government 28 March. Kouyaté submitted 2 bills to President Conté 7 March to reduce number of ministerial posts from 27 to 19 and define future portfolios. New government composed mostly of technocrats not associated with Conté's regime, including representatives of trade unions, diplomats, lawyers and economists. But deputy chief of staff of army, known to be close to Conté, named Minister of Defence. Kouyaté's authority is limited to civilian administration as President Conté retains control of army. UNSG Ban Ki-moon welcomed Kouyaté's appointment and called for international support for Guinea.

- "Guinea president names new-look cabinet", Reuters, 28 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°121, *Guinea: Change or Chaos*, 14 Feb. 2007.

🏠 Guinea-Bissau Situation increasingly fragile after government received no-confidence vote from parliament 19 March (54 to 28). President Vieira failed to meet constitutional requirement to dissolve government within 72 hours of vote. Mass demonstrations held in capital 30/31 March. PM Aristide Gomes offered resignation to Vieira 29 March. Presidency previously rejected calls from 3 main parliamentary parties to dissolve Gomes government in favour of national unity coalition that would introduce degree of parliamentary stability, and allow main opposition PAIGC to name consensus premier. Power struggle between government administration and parliament has previously led to violent clashes.

- "President under pressure as demonstrators block capital", IRIN, 30 Mar. 2007.
- "Prime minister of Guinea-Bissau announces resignation", *International Herald Tribune*, 29 Mar. 2007.

🏠 Liberia Former Chairman of transitional government Gyude Bryant, on charges of corruption, submitted himself to High Court 13 March, but was released after paying 3 million euro "bond". Supreme Court suspended trial procedure to examine Bryant's claim to immunity from prosecution for period of chairmanship. UN Special Representative Alan Doss reported to UNSC political situation remained "quite stable", but serious security challenges, including unstable neighbours, require attention. UNSC extended UNMIL until 30 September 2007, but requested UNSG Ban Ki-moon present "drawdown plan" by mid August.

- "Court halts Bryant case", *Inquirer*, 26 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 Apr. 2006.

🏠 Nigeria Election-related violence intensified with risk of major confrontation between President Obasanjo and Vice-President Atiku Abubakar camps around April polls. Electoral commission's disqualification of Action Congress (AC) presidential candidate Abubakar led to protests prompting threat of security crackdown. All 7 members of senate committee probing graft allegations against both Obasanjo and Abubakar resigned 21 March, saying senate leaders had pressured them to water down report later presented to Senate. Political violence included PDP-ANPP clash in Ogun state 9-10 March, killing 4; PDP-AC clashes in Benue state 18 March, killing 10. Military Joint Task Force in Niger Delta freed

4 foreign hostages held by Niger Delta militants; 4 others released; militants vowed to carry out more kidnappings. Between 2 and 4 March, clashes between rival armed groups killed at least 11 in Port Harcourt. Communal clashes also occurred in Kula, Joinkrama, Rivers state, Anambra state and Ogun state, killing 30.

- "Blood and oil", *Economist*, 15 Mar. 2007.
- "Nigeria vice president files suit over exclusion from April's election", *International Herald Tribune*, 15 Mar. 2007.
- "Violence breeds anarchy", *Vanguard*, 12 Mar. 2007.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°123, *Nigeria's Elections: Avoiding a Political Crisis*, 28 March 2007. The April general elections in Nigeria must be transparent and credible if the country and the region are to achieve peace and stability. President Olusegun Obasanjo needs to solve his differences with Vice President Atiku Abubakar immediately and assure that the Independent National Electoral Commission receives enough funds to keep its independence. The AU and ECOWAS should urgently send a joint mediation team to assist with resolving disputes before and immediately after the election. If the results are unaccepted and disputed, violence can erupt and escalate into a more serious conflict, destabilising the entire region.

🏠 Senegal Electoral commission confirmed reelection of President Abdoulaye Wade 1 March with 55.86% of votes, avoiding second round ballot. Electoral court dismissed opposition claims of fraud and confirmed Wade's victory 11 March. Parliamentary polls due 3 June.

- "Wade accuses political opponents of corruption", *Gambia Echo*, 4 Mar. 2007.

🏠 Sierra Leone Voter registration for July presidential and general elections closed 18 March. Electoral Commission announced 72% of electorate registered in 3-week period and rejected extension request by politicians and civil society groups who claimed over 50% not registered due to logistical problems, violence and poor pay for registrars. First-ever UN Peacebuilding Commission mission began talks 22 March with President Kabbah and senior officials; UN Peacebuilding Fund to extend \$35 million. Resentment rose against Special Court for Sierra Leone for indicting Hinga Norman, ex-defence minister, following his (natural) death 22 February.

- "UN Peacebuilding Commission ends maiden field trip with new insights", UN News, 28 Mar. 2007.
- "As NEC ends voter registration Sunday – over 1 million Sierra Leoneans may be disenfranchised", *Concord Times*, 16 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

🏠 Kazakhstan 3 killed in clash between ethnic Kazakh and Chechen youth in Malovodnoye, near Almaty; authorities downplayed ethnic aspect of incident.

- "Village brawl reverberates in halls of power", IWPR, 23 Mar. 2007.

↓ Kyrgyzstan Political confrontation mounted as 2 main opposition movements announced plans to begin open-ended demonstrations in April, calling for reform and early presidential elections. Groups closer to President Bakiev formed pro-stability bloc, rejecting calls for early elections but urging reform. Opposition "For Reforms!" movement split as some influential members left in apparent protest at movement's confrontational stance. PM Azim Isabekov resigned, opposition leader Almazbek Atambayev confirmed PM 30 March, but other opposition leaders refused to participate in coalition government. Bakiev fired ally Prosecutor-General Kambaraly Kongantiyev, criticised over slow investigation into 2002 police shootings of demonstrators in Aksy.

- "Kyrgyz president signs decrees on cabinet", RFE/RL, 30 Mar. 2007.
- "Hizb ut-Tahrir emboldened in Kyrgyzstan", IWPR, 12 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°55, *Kyrgyzstan on the Edge*, 9 Nov. 2006.

↳ Tajikistan President Rahmon(ov) removed Russian suffix from surname and required all newborns be registered with Tajik surnames. Ali Akbar Turajonzoda, a United Tajik Opposition leader during civil war, called for blanket amnesty for all former opposition combatants. Last major civil-war era field commander to hold government post, Interior Ministry General Suhrob Qosimov, resigned, bringing era of warlordism to end.

- "Tajiks 'must drop Russian names'", BBC, 27 Mar. 2007.
- "Former opposition leader urges civil war amnesty", RFE/RL, 15 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.

↳ Turkmenistan President Berdimuhammedov continued education reforms, reinstated pension payments and restricted presidential powers for naming institutions and delineating administrative units.

- "New Turkmen president restores pensions to more than 100,000", *International Herald Tribune*, 19 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°60, *Turkmenistan after Niyazov*, 12 Feb. 2007.

↳ Uzbekistan Arrests and heavy sentencing of opposition activists and journalists continued. Journalist Nataliya Bushueva charged with tax evasion and operating without accreditation. Rustam Muminov, accused of Hizb ut-Tahrir affiliation, and controversially extradited from Russia in 2006, sentenced to over 5 years for involvement in 2005 Andijon uprising. Court in Namangan sentenced local Birlik movement leader Muhammadali Qoraboyev to 6 years for extortion and fraud, charges supporters say politically motivated.

- "Rights watchdog urges U.N. to take urgent action on Uzbekistan", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 Mar. 2007.
- "Uzbek jailed after extradition from Russia", AlertNet, 16 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°54, *Uzbekistan: Europe's Sanctions Matter*, 6 Nov. 2006.

SOUTH ASIA

↳ Afghanistan U.S. marines reportedly fired on civilians following suicide attack in eastern Afghanistan 4 March:

perceived trend of civilian casualties prompted large protests in Jalalabad. Lower house of National Assembly passed National Reconciliation Plan 12 March following amendments by President Karzai allowing individual accountability for war crimes if cases pursued by victims and not state; legality of amnesty provisions remains unclear. Italian journalist freed by Taliban kidnappers 19 March in exchange for 5 Taliban fighters, though driver beheaded and translator remains captive; deal prompted sharp criticism from U.S. and others. Visiting UN drugs chief Costa said poppy production "out of control" in south. Joint NATO-Afghan Operation Achilles launched in Helmand, largest joint operation to date: deadliest fighting focused on area near Kajaki Dam.

- "Italy swapped 5 jailed Taliban for a hostage", *New York Times*, 22 Mar. 2007.
- "Amnesty law draws criticism, praise", RFE/RL, 14 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Asia Briefing N°59 *Afghanistan's Endangered Compact*, 29 Jan. 2007.

↳ Bangladesh Army moved to formalise role in caretaker administration as crackdown on corruption continued with no new date set for postponed January general election. New polls not expected before 2008; emergency rule continues. Government announced reconstitution of National Security Council, defunct since return to democratic rule in 1991. Senior BNP official and son of ex-PM Khaleda Zia arrested 8 March for corruption. 6 members of Islamist group JMB hanged 30 March for alleged role in 2005 murder of 2 judges.

- "Bangladesh leader says no let-up in anti-graft fight", AlertNet, 25 Mar. 2007.
- "Bangladesh forces arrest ex-PM's son", *Financial Times*, 8 Mar. 2007.

↳ India (non-Kashmir) Up to 400 Naxalite Maoist rebels launched 15 March attack on Chhattisgarh police station, killing dozens of officers and escaping with arms, raising fears of increased Naxalite violence. Talks between New Delhi and ULFA separatists remained in deadlock, amid reports of continued attacks on migrant labourers in Manipur state.

- "India's Maoist insurgency gathers pace as police station raid kills 55", *Guardian*, 16 Mar. 2007.

↳ Kashmir Hizbul Mujahideen member "Yaseen" killed by Indian forces 2 March. As protests continued over security force killings, New Delhi set up expert panel to consider reduction in Kashmir troop levels and revision to Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act that grants broad powers of detention. Defence ministers' talks on Siachen glacier due 6 April in Rawalpindi.

- "India considers Kashmir troops cut as violence eases", AlertNet, 23 Mar. 2007.
- "Kashmir TV channels suspended after militant threats", AlertNet, 5 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°51, *India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace*, 15 June 2006.

↳ Nepal Peace process bolstered by formation of new government 1 April. Maoists hold 5 of 21 ministries; new government set 20 June date for Constituent Assembly polls. Month had seen wrangling over cabinet posts and continued concerns over Maoist commitment to abandon violence after Maoist leader Prachanda said thousands of Maoist weapons and combatants yet to be confined under terms of UN process.

Violence continued in south despite decisive 9 March vote to shift from unitary to federal system and increase southern representation in parliament. In worst incident 21 March supporters of Madhesi rights group killed over 20 Maoists in violent organised attack in Gaur.

- ["Nepal swears Maoists into cabinet"](#), BBC, 1 Apr. 2007.
- ["Nepal Maoists 'not confined yet'"](#), BBC, 13 Mar. 2007.
- ["Nepal changes into federal state"](#), BBC, 9 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°128, [Nepal's Constitutional Process](#), 26 Feb. 2007.

⏪ Pakistan Fighting flared in South Waziristan between Uzbek militants and local militias. Violence began 18 March as local militias sought to expel foreign militants from bases near Wana; clashes reportedly killed over 150 foreign fighters. Pakistani intelligence said key al-Qaeda camps destroyed and President Musharraf claimed battles prove success of controversial pacts with local leaders to fight foreign militants. New security pact signed with tribal leaders in Bajaur, where 4 ISI intelligence agents shot 27 March by unidentified gunmen. President Musharraf faced political crisis after suspending Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary 12 March, sparking wave of judiciary resignations and protests over independence of judiciary; opposition demonstrations called on Musharraf to step down. U.S. Assistant Sec. State Boucher pledged \$750 million in assistance to Afghan border areas during visit 15 March.

- ["Uzbeks outstay Pashtun welcome"](#), al Jazeera, 28 Mar. 2007.
- ["Toll in Waziristan clashes rises to 132"](#), Dawn, 23 Mar. 2007.
- ["Pakistan judge becomes symbol of revolt"](#), *Financial Times*, 20 Mar. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°130, [Pakistan: Karachi's Madrasas and Violent Extremism](#), 29 March 2007. A network of Pakistani madrasas supporting violent jihadi groups poses a significant threat to domestic, regional and international security. These religious schools continue to play a negative role five years after President Pervez Musharraf promised a full reform of the sector. The international community needs to press Musharraf to fulfil his commitments, in particular to enforce genuine controls on the madrasas and allow free and fair national elections in 2007. It should also shift the focus of its donor aid from helping the government's ineffectual efforts to reform the religious schools to improving the very weak public school sector.



⏪ Sri Lanka Fighting continued to spread in east and new front opened in north west (Mannar district) as government seized more rebel-controlled territory. Several dozen killed and hundreds wounded in gun battles and artillery fire. Tigers bombed military base adjacent to Colombo civilian airport 26 March in first-ever rebel air attack, and launched suicide attack on army camp in east. UNHCR warned of deepening crisis as massive displacement continued in east, where 40,000 fled from Batticaloa district in single week; 160,000 reported displaced in district in late March. Ruling SLFP party delayed submission of its proposals on political solution until April.

- ["Sri Lankan separatists take fight to the air"](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 Mar. 2007.
- ["Food, shelter scarce in Sri Lanka war refugee exodus"](#), AlertNet, 15 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°124, [Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process](#), 28 Nov. 2006.

NORTH EAST ASIA

⏪ North Korea 6-party talks resumed in Beijing 19 March to implement February breakthrough but stalled when Pyongyang walked out 22 March over U.S. failure to unfreeze funds in Macao bank. Technical difficulties continued to stall release as Pyongyang refused to set date for further talks. Bilateral talks with Japan failed 8 March over issue of alleged kidnappings. In rare admission, Pyongyang announced million-tonne food shortage.

- ["U.S. Treasury official to help free up North Korean funds"](#), *New York Times*, 24 Mar. 2007.
- ["Show us the money"](#), *Economist*, 22 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°56, [North Korea's Nuclear Test: The Fallout](#), 13 Nov. 2006.

⏪ Taiwan Strait Taiwan President Chen made new calls for full independence in 4 March speech Beijing called "criminal". U.S. Defence Department announced plans to make \$421m missile sale to Taipei; Beijing said deal would harm regional security. In visit to Beijing, U.S. military chief Peter Pace called for increased transparency in China's military ambitions.

- ["China fury at Chen's Taiwan call"](#), BBC, 5 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, [China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente](#), 21 Sept. 2005.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

⏪ Indonesia Anti-terror police group Detachment 88 acting on information from Poso, conducted raids in Java, arresting 7 with alleged connections to Jemaah Islamiyah and netting several hundred kg of explosives. In West Aceh district head run-off vote, GAM slate won over 76%, despite interference by Indonesian military (TNI) documented by EU monitoring team. Tensions between ex-GAM and TNI rising in North Aceh; 4 soldiers beaten on 22-23 March on suspicion of being spies, then retaliated by beating villagers several days later. In Papua, tribal conflict flared in Yoparu, Painai district, killing 9.

- ["Terror raids continue with new arrest"](#), *Jakarta Post*, 27 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Asia Report N°127, [Jihadism in Indonesia: Poso on the Edge](#), 24 Jan. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°61, [Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh](#), 22



March 2007. Candidates from the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) defied all predictions and won local elections largely because of effective grassroots structures, appeals to Acehnese identity, and a focus on poor and marginal areas. Four key questions are: how well the former insurgents will govern; how they will use political office to build a new political party to contest parliamentary elections in 2009; how well they will be able to control their own members; and how they will manage the issue of self-government. The new officials and the government in Jakarta need to show the Acehnese that post-conflict autonomy is different and better than what they had before.

⏪ Myanmar/Burma Several fatal clashes in month between military and Karen National Union rebels, including major fighting 10 March that killed 14, injured 300. Karen peace demonstration 18 March urged end to violence. Preliminary peace talks held 15 March between Chin National Front and government. Ethnic Kukis along Indian border observed

general strike to protest alleged military abduction of 400 locals 13 March. ICRC announced re-closure of offices in Mon and Shan, citing increased government restrictions.

- [“Myanmar military offensive leaves 14 dead, 300 ethnic Karen flee to Thailand”](#), AP, 12 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°58, [Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid](#), 8 Dec. 2006.

➤ Philippines Fighting between MILF rebels and government forces in North Cotabato killed over 20 and put increased stress on 6-year-old peace talks between MILF and Manila. President Arroyo called on army to work harder to maintain peace after MILF said ceasefire on verge of collapse. Organisation of Islamic Countries announced July talks between MNLF and Manila in Jeddah. MNLF leader Nur Misuari filed candidacy for governor of Sulu province. U.S. Congress launched investigation into extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, highlighted by February UN report.

- [“Keep Mindanao peace, Arroyo orders military”](#), *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 13 Mar. 2007.
- [“Breakthrough seen in Manila’s talks with Muslim rebels”](#), AlertNet, 10 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, [Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts](#), 19 Dec. 2005.

➤ Thailand Continued insecurity in south, but government reasserted commitment to “peaceful approach”. 8 Buddhist civilians killed in Yala province 14 March prompted imposition of night-time curfew. PM Surayud rejected calls by army chief and coup leader Sonthi for state of emergency in response to pro-Thaksin protests, but pledged to hold December elections.

- [“Thai army detains 13 Muslims in rebellious south”](#), AlertNet, 28 Mar. 2007.
- [“Violence tests soft strategy in Thailand’s Muslim south”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 Mar. 2007.
- [“Nine killed in southern Thailand”](#), BBC, 14 Mar. 2007.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°129, [Southern Thailand: The Impact of the Coup](#), 15



March 2007. Six months after the coup which overthrew Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawata, Thailand still faces a serious security threat in the Muslim South and a real risk of communal violence. Despite its limited mandate, the interim government should take a number of steps to undercut militant claims it is trying to destroy Malay culture and Islam, by reforming the education system and allowing the local dialect to be used as the language of instruction. Without engaging in the kind of indiscriminate crackdowns favoured by Thaksin, the government must also reinforce security by patrolling the areas controlled by militants.

➤ ➤ Timor-Leste Presidential election campaigns began for 9 April poll with risk of increased political violence. Supporters of current PM Jose Ramos-Horta and Fretilin party clashed 30 March. Ramos-Horta seen as favourite while incumbent President Xanana Gusmao to stand for PM later in year as candidate for newly formed Congress for National Reconstruction of East Timor. Australian-led international peacekeeping forces failed to capture rebel leader Alfredo Reinado in 4 March raid on his base; 4 rebels died and mass protests followed in Dili.

- [“Timor PM supporters attacked as vote nears”](#), *Age*, 31 Mar. 2007.

- [“Protests in East Timor after raid on army rebel”](#), AlertNet, 5 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°120, [Resolving Timor-Leste’s Crisis](#), 10 Oct. 2006.

PACIFIC

➤ Fiji Pacific Islands Forum said December coup “unacceptable”; urged Frank Bainimarama to resign post as interim PM and hold elections within 18 months. Deposed PM Laisenia Qarase faced treason charges for allegedly requesting foreign intervention to ward off coup.

- [“Pacific forum calls for Fiji poll”](#), BBC, 16 Mar. 2007.

➤ Tonga Chairman of pro-democracy People’s Committee for Political Reform, warned of further unrest after government renewed state of emergency for fourth time. Commonwealth envoy Douglas Graham to facilitate talks between government and pro-democracy movement early April.

- [“Pro-democracy leader tips Tonga unrest”](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 Mar. 2007.

➤ Vanuatu State of emergency imposed after 3 March riot that erupted after Tanna islanders alleged an Ambrym islander used sorcery to kill Tanna woman in capital, Port Vila. 3 died and 150 arrested in ensuing violence. National Council of Chiefs banned “black magic” at late-month meeting to prevent further flare-ups and pledged reconciliation talks for future date.

- [“Vanuatu chiefs ban black magic after riot over woman’s death”](#), Bloomberg, 27 Mar. 2007.

Europe

BALKANS

➤ Bosnia & Herzegovina Muslim-Croat federation parliament approved new government headed by PM Nedžad Brankovic, but High Representative Schwarz-Schilling suspended appointments until vetting by his office complete. Srebrenica returnees threatened to leave Republika Srpska (RS) collectively if conditions did not improve. Srebrenica Municipal Council voted 24 March for district status separate from RS: move supported by Muslim and Croat presidency members, denounced by Bosnian Serbs, and declared unacceptable by Schwarz-Schilling. RS government gave special status to Srebrenica within RS and threatened to dismiss municipal government 28 March. Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Ceric angered Serbs with statements suggesting Bosnia should be Muslim national state. New round of police reform talks ended 14 March without progress; EU warned issue made Stabilisation and Association Agreement in 2007 unlikely. EUFOR troop reduction under way.

- [“Stalled reforms holding up BiH’s EU integration progress”](#), *Southeast European Times*, 16 Mar. 2007.
- [“Bosnia split on Srebrenica request for self-rule”](#), AlertNet, 12 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°180, [Ensuring Bosnia’s Future: A New International Engagement Strategy](#), 15 Feb. 2007.

- Kosovo UN special envoy Martti Ahtisaari hosted final round of unproductive status talks in Vienna 10 March after revising his settlement proposal 7 March, easing its acceptance by Kosovo Albanians but further dissatisfying Belgrade, which rejected it. Proposal forwarded to New York with additional report recommending supervised independence. UNSG Ban Ki-moon endorsed and sent both to UNSC members 26 March. U.S., EU and NATO indicated support for plan. Russia called for further talks and proposed review of implementation of Resolution 1244 before UNSC consideration of Ahtisaari plan. 75 Romanians serving in UN police force left Kosovo despite ongoing investigation into several officers' conduct during 10 February clash with Vetevendosje movement protestors that left 2 dead. 3 and 31 March Vetevendosje protests passed without violence. Several small explosions in Bosnjacka Mahala of Mitrovica; reports of 30 March mortar grenade explosion near Decani monastery being investigated. Attempt by 150 enclave Serb delegates to form "Serb national assembly" broken up by Belgrade loyalists in Gracanica 4 March. AAK party leader and former PM Haradinaj went on trial in Hague on war crime charges 5 March.
- Comment by Alain Déléroz (Crisis Group), "[Le statut final du Kosovo est une affaire européenne et Moscou doit le comprendre](#)", *Le Temps*, 27 Mar. 2007.
 - Comment by Richard Holbrooke, "[Russia's test in Kosovo](#)", *Washington Post*, 13 Mar. 2007.
 - "[Kosovo readies for "inevitable" independence](#)", AlertNet, 28 Mar. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°45, [Kosovo's Status: Difficult Months Ahead](#), 20 Dec. 2006.

- Macedonia PM Gruevski met with Ali Ahmeti, leader of opposition DUI, largest Albanian party, 7 March: agreed to resume political dialogue and form task force to draw up list of laws affecting minorities to be adopted by "Badinter principle" majority in parliament.
- "[Political dialogue resumes in Macedonia](#)", *Southeast European Times*, 12 Mar. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

- Serbia President Tadic's Democratic Party and PM Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia continued to disagree over formation of new government; Kostunica insisted on remaining PM. Government adopted, unconstitutionally, temporary budget without parliamentary approval to prevent government shut-down. 5 men arrested and weapons seized during police raids on alleged Wahhabi training camp in Sandzak. Split between Belgrade Mufti Hamdija Jusufspahic and Sandzak Mufti Muamer Zukorlic as latter created competing Islamic Community encompassing majority of Serbia's Muslims.
- Comment by Andrew Stroehlein & Sabine Freizer (Crisis Group), "[The EU's inexcusable pardon for Serbia](#)", *European Voice*, 29 Mar. 2007.
 - Comment by Gareth Evans and James Lyon (Crisis Group), "[No Mladic, no Talks](#)", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 Mar. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°44, [Serbia's New Constitution: Democracy Going Backwards](#), 8 Nov. 2006.

CAUCASUS

- Armenia Entire government resigned en masse, as required by constitution, following unexpected death from heart attack of PM Andranik Markarian 25 March.
- "[Armenian government resigns following premier's death](#)", RFE/RL, 26 Mar. 2007.
- Azerbaijan Opposition Musavat party held Baku demonstration against utility and oil price hikes 17 March. Independent MP Huseyin Abdullayev arrested 19 March after accusing government of deception and scuffling with another MP in parliament; arrest called politically motivated.
- "[Splits at the top](#)", IWPR, 29 Mar. 2007.
 - "[Azerbaijani premier's annual report triggers fistfight in parliament](#)", RFE/RL, 19 Mar. 2007.
 - For most recent Crisis Group report, see Europe Briefing N°40, [Azerbaijan's 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity](#), 21 Nov. 2005.
- Chechnya (Russia) Ramzan Kadyrov, nominated Chechen president by Russian President Putin, endorsed by Chechen parliament 1 March. Kadyrov declared separation of authority agreement between Chechen and federal governments "unnecessary", announcing plans to align constitution with federal legislation. Bomb killed 1 Russian serviceman near Gekhi-Chu 24 March and federal soldiers killed woman in Urdukhoi. 4 militants died in clash with troops near Tazen-Kale 23 March. Rebel commander Tahir Batayev killed in shoot-out with military in Gudermes 21 March. Severny civilian airport reopened 8 March.
- "[Chechen president opposes separation of powers treaty with Moscow](#)", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 Mar. 2007.
 - "[Chechen PM confirmed as president](#)", BBC, 2 Mar. 2007.
- North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) In Dagestan, 11 March parliamentary elections marred by violence and fraud allegations. Final results announced 21 March following recount demanded by opposition parties: Pro-Kremlin party United Russia won 63.7%; Union of Right Forces struck from ballot after 3 candidates unexpectedly withdrew, leaving party short of required candidates in all districts. 2 killed in clashes between parties' supporters in Dakhadai region. 1 candidate reported missing. Gunmen shot dead 1 civilian in attack on police in Makhachkala 15 March and killed 2 federal security service agents in Khasavyurt 14 March; police killed suspected rebel 23 March. In Ingushetia, gunmen kidnapped President Zyazikov's uncle outside Nazran 23 March. Republic also saw extra-judicial killings by security services in Malgobek 15 March and Nazran 7 March. Police reportedly detained 15 North Ossetian police officers who crossed administrative border to detain 4 Ingush officers 29 March.
- "[Relative of leader of restive southern Russian province kidnapped, 2 aides injured](#)", AP, 23 Mar. 2007.
 - "[Dagestan's "dirty" election](#)", IWPR, 22 Mar. 2007.
- Georgia In Abkhazia's Tbilisi-controlled upper Kodori gorge 2 villages came under fire 11 March. Tbilisi alleged Russian helicopter involvement; Moscow denied: Joint Fact Finding Group investigation under way. Abkhaz de facto authorities held parliamentary election and run-off 4 and 18 March, not recognised by Tbilisi who claimed both rounds boycotted by ethnic Georgians in Gali district. In South Ossetia, Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues Merab Antadze presented Tbilisi's

new proposals; dismissed by South Ossetian Joint Control Commission (JCC) Co-Chair Chochiev. Informal meeting of JCC Co-Chairs held in Istanbul 21-22 March. President Saakashvili met with Kurta-based alternative (pro-Tbilisi) de facto authorities of South Ossetia to discuss entity's future status within Georgia 19 March. 2 Georgian police killed when patrol car came under fire in South Ossetia 25 March.

- "Military base construction fuels Georgian-South Ossetian tension", Eurasia Insight, 27 Mar. 2007.
- "Georgia's breakaway Abkhazia elects parliament", AlertNet, 19 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Europe Report N°179, *Abkhazia: Ways Forward*, 18 Jan. 2007.

➤ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) 14 March Geneva meeting between Azeri and Armenian FMs organised by Minsk Group brought little progress. "Deep differences" remain over unspecified aspects of peace accord according to Armenian FM Oskanian. Ministers agreed to meet in April in preparation for late May presidential summit. Sniper from NK forces killed Azerbaijani soldier in Agdam district near NK 15 March.

- "Azerbaijani soldier killed by Armenian sniper: official", *Baku Today*, 18 Mar. 2007.
- "Armenian, Azerbaijani foreign ministers meet", RFE/RL, 15 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace*, 11 Oct. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

➤ Belarus Over 10,000 protestors marking Freedom Day and calling for President Lukashenko's ouster clashed with police 25 March. Dozens arrested, including chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front, Vintsuk Vyachorka, but no mass arrests typical of previous protests occurred.

- "Has regime adopted new tactics toward opposition?", RFE/RL, 27 Mar. 2007.
- "Police block protesters from main square in Belarus capital, allow gathering elsewhere", AP, 25 Mar. 2007.

➤ Moldova Police arrested 15 Liberal party members and journalists for ceremony commemorating 1918 unification with Romania. Earlier, government accused Bucharest of undermining its security by easing access for Moldovans to Romanian citizenship. In Transnistria, Patriotic Party Tiraspol chief Viktor Neumoyin shot dead by unknown gunmen 13 March. EU military inspectors visited military installations in Transnistria buffer zone 28-29 March.

- "Moldovan police detain politicians commemorating 1918 unification with Romania", AP, 27 Mar. 2007.
- "Major politician killed in separatist Moldova area", AlertNet, 13 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°175, *Moldova's Uncertain Future*, 17 Aug. 2006.

➤ Ukraine Rival rallies of supporters of governing coalition and opposition held 31 March despite court ban; protests followed President Yushchenko's 29 March threat to dissolve parliament for snap elections. Parliament approved former economy minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk as foreign minister 21 March following its second rejection of Yushchenko's previous nominee Volodymyr Ohryzko. 11 opposition parliamentarians defected to ruling coalition giving latter 260 out of 450 seats,

still 40 short of majority needed to amend constitution, while defector Anatoliy Kinakh named economics minister.

- "Ukraine leader suggests new poll", Reuters, 31 Mar. 2007.
- "More opposition lawmakers join ruling coalition led by Ukrainian president's rival", AP, 23 Mar. 2007.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

Crisis Group Europe Report N°181, *Islam and Identity in Germany*, 14 March 2007. Germany's leaders should concentrate on the practical problems that undermine social cohesion - political alienation, over-zealous policing and economic inequality - and avoid the temptation to score domestic political points with hard-line rhetoric about Turkish and other Muslim immigration.



➤ Basque Country (Spain) Mass Madrid rally held to protest release to home arrest of hunger-striking former ETA leader Jose Ignacio de Juana Chaos, convicted of 25 murders. Madrid court acquitted outlawed Batasuna party leader Arnaldo Otegi of praising terrorism: before trial Otegi told media self-determination should be achieved through democracy. Separatist politicians applied to have new party, Patriotic Socialist Union, registered for May local elections. 31 March Basque nationalist rally allowed on condition no mention of new party. Supreme Court decision on party ban pending. Police on alert after arresting 8 suspected ETA members in Andoain 28 March and seizing explosives in Navarra and Guipuzcoa 30 March.

- "Spanish police 'smash' Eta unit", BBC, 31 Mar. 2007.
- "Otegi califica de "error" utilizar la "lucha armada" para conseguir la independencia del País Vasco", *El Pais*, 20 Mar. 2007.
- "Madrid rally over ETA man release", BBC, 10 Mar. 2007.

➤ Cyprus President Papadopoulos called on Turkish Cypriot counterpart Talat to immediately restart preliminary talks; Talat accused him of political manoeuvring, saying still no agreement on ground rules for talks. Following earlier Turkish move, Greek Cypriots demolished wall on Green Line dividing major Nicosia street. But Papadopoulos said civilians could not cross until Turkey withdraws troops from island.

- "Divided Cyprus' leaders squabble over new talks", *International Herald Tribune*, 20 Mar. 2007.
- "Symbolic Nicosia wall comes down", BBC, 9 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, *The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?*, 8 Mar. 2006.

➤ Northern Ireland (UK) Historic breakthrough in peace process as Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin (SF) leaders Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams agreed to share power in governing province from 8 May. Emergency legislation passed in Westminster 27 March to allow implementation of previous day's accord. Jim Allister, DUP's only MEP, and several DUP councillors, quit party in protest of deal. In first joint DUP-SF letter, Paisley and SF's Martin McGuinness asked NI Sec. Peter Hain to vacate Stormont office; Hain said "delighted" to.

- "Northern Ireland's arch-enemies declare peace", *Guardian*, 27 Mar. 2007.
- "In Northern Ireland, peace driven by economics", *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 Mar. 2007.

- Turkey Ongoing clashes between armed forces and PKK in south east left at least 7 dead. Cases against pro-Kurdish politicians increased, including Van court sentencing of Hakkari Mayor Metin Tekce to 7 years prison for denying PKK terrorist organisation and 6-month sentence to Democratic Society Party leader Ahmet Turk for referring to jailed PKK leader as "Mr/esteemed Ocalan". Investigation launched after opposition claimed PM Erdogan had referred to Ocalan in same way during 2000 interview. 300 detained but no major violence during Nevruz holiday period, associated in past with clashes over Kurdish issue. Land forces Chief General Ilker Basbug said Turkey has legal right to act against PKK in Northern Iraq.
- "Turkish general says can hit Kurd rebels in Iraq", AlertNet, 10 Mar. 2007.
 - "Kurd jailed for honouring Ocalan", BBC, 6 Mar. 2007.



Latin America / Caribbean

- Bolivia President Morales replaced head of state petroleum company 23 March following discovery of 44 flawed contracts with foreign energy companies. Errors delayed May 2006 nationalisation process; new head is fourth to serve in 14 months. Morales promised elections as early as 2008 once new constitution adopted, subject to national referendum to be held earliest December 2007. Constituent Assembly still to agree on many controversial issues including regional autonomy, decentralisation and new territorial entities. National emergency declared after heavy flooding in eastern lowlands likely to delay implementation of agrarian reform law.
- "Bolivia's Morales replaces head of state energy company after contract errors", AP, 23 Mar. 2007.
 - "Morales: Bolivia may hold presidential election once new constitution complete", AP, 16 Mar. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°13, *Bolivia's Reforms: The Danger of New Conflicts*, 8 Jan. 2007.

- Colombia "Parapolitics" scandal spread to highest ranks as leaked CIA intelligence alleged collaboration between army chief Mario Montoya and right-wing paramilitaries; Bogotá denied allegations. FARC agreed to meet with 7 U.S. members of Congress seeking release of 61 FARC hostages, but reasserted demilitarisation of Pradera and Florida remains prerequisite to hostage negotiation. Talks between government and ELN resumed 3 March but parties agreed not to make any public declarations. 18 died early in month during confrontations between Colombian Army and FARC in Meta.
- "'Não é hora de conflitos': entreviste com Raul Reyes", *Isto É*, 28 Mar. 2007.
 - "Colombia army chief linked to outlaw militias", *LA Times*, 25 Mar. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Briefing N°11, *Tougher Challenges Ahead for Colombia's Uribe*, 20 Oct. 2006.

- Ecuador Dismissal of 57 opposition members of Congress 7 March by Electoral Court sparked institutional crisis as supporters of President Rafael Correa and opposition wrestled for control of Congress in tangled legal battle. Opposition members later reinstated, but blocked by supporters from entering Congress building. Referendum on proposed constitutional changes still expected 15 April. Congress

studying possibility of changing composition of Constitutional Court. 1 Colombian and 1 Ecuadorean killed in Colombian military anti-guerrilla operation that allegedly crossed border into Ecuador; Quito formally protested.

- "Another Ecuador crisis deepens as a judge is fired ahead of voting", *New York Times*, 30 Mar. 2007.
- "Ecuador's warring congresses vie for control", *Financial Times*, 20 Mar. 2007.

- Haiti Haitian police (HNP) arrested Cité Soleil gang leader Evens Jeune "Ti Kouto" 13 March; 2 other gang leaders targeted in February MINUSTAH raids still on run. UN said 400 gang members arrested by HNP in 3 months. Finance minister said improving security situation will be priority for funds freed up by Inter-American Development Bank debt relief program announced this month.
- "More than 400 gangsters seized", UN News, 28 Mar. 2007.
 - Comment by Mark Schneider and Damien Helly (Crisis Group), "Let's offer hope to Cité Soleil", *Miami Herald*, 12 Mar. 2007.
 - For background, see Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°14, *Haiti: Justice Reform and the Security Crisis*, 31 Jan. 2007.

- Venezuela Government seized 16 farms and said planning 13 further seizures in April in intensified land reform campaign. High inflation led President Chávez to announce stringent measures to control prices and phased introduction of new stronger currency by end 2007. Difficulties in unifying all Chavista parties into United Socialist Party of Venezuela underscored divisions in Chávez ranks.
- "Venezuela steps up land seizures", BBC, 26 Mar. 2007.
 - Comment by Alain Déléroz (Crisis Group), "Hugo Chavez ou la fuite en avant d'un caudillo typiquement sud-américain", *Le Temps*, 9 Mar. 2007.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°19, *Venezuela: Hugo Chávez's Revolution*, 22 Feb. 2007.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- Israel/Occupied Territories Palestinian national unity government took office 17 March. Hopes raised by Arab League summit 28-30 March decision to renew commitment to 2002 Saudi initiative – the one diplomatic opening in which Israel has expressed interest though refused to endorse. Kidnappings and assassinations in Gaza underlined challenges ahead, while Hamas rejected President Abbas's 18 March appointment of Muhammad Dahlan as National Security Advisor. Israel extended ban on political contacts with Palestinian Authority (PA) and restricted engagement to discussions of security and humanitarian issues, despite ministerial appeals to continue final status talks with Abbas and U.S. Sec. State Condoleezza Rice. Israel's formal downgrading of talks with Abbas marked divergence with Washington, which declared itself open to contacts with non-Hamas PA ministers.
- "A diplomatic minuet", *Economist*, 29 Mar. 2007.
 - Comment by Rob Malley (Crisis Group), "Palestine, l'Europe face à ses responsabilités", *Le Monde*, 14 Mar. 2007.

- Comment by Chris Patten (Crisis Group Co-Chair), [“Time to judge Palestine on its results”](#), *Financial Times*, 13 Mar. 2007.
- [“Crisis Group Board Calls for Urgent New Commitment to Arab-Israeli Peace”](#), 26 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N° 62, [After Mecca: Engaging Hamas](#), 28 Feb. 2007; and Crisis Group Middle East Initiative, [“Global Leaders Call for Action on Arab-Israeli Settlement”](#), 4 Oct. 2006.

➤ Lebanon Political paralysis continued. Regional mediation efforts increased but failed to produce results. Saudi Arabia launched initiative involving deal on international tribunal and establishment of government of national unity, followed by preparation of new electoral law; but details not clear. Arrests of members of Islamist group Fatah al-Islam implicated Syrians and Saudis in connection with February blasts in Ayn Alaq.

- [“UN chief tries to bridge Lebanon divide”](#), BBC, 30 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°20, [Lebanon at a Tripwire](#), 21 Dec. 2006.

➤ Syria In first visit in 2 years EU foreign policy chief Solana urged Damascus to play positive role in Lebanon and Iraq and expressed support for Syria's aim of regaining Golan Heights. Kurdish political groups planned to boycott 22 April parliamentary elections alleging 100,000 Kurds not allowed to participate; majority of opposition parties also not contesting poll. 10,000 candidates due to contest 250 parliamentary seats; 167 reserved for ruling Baath party and allies.

- [“Rebuilding bridges”](#), *Guardian*, 30 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, [Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria](#), 12 Apr. 2005.

GULF

➤ Iran Tensions escalated over seizure of 15 UK navy personnel Iran claimed entered its waters illegally, further complicating stalled nuclear diplomacy. Seizure occurred during UK operation in Shatt-al-Arab waterway between Iraq and Iran day before 24 March unanimous UN Security Council vote to impose second round of sanctions on Tehran for refusal to suspend uranium enrichment. Iran responded by partially halting cooperation with International Atomic Energy Agency. Former deputy defence minister, Ali Reza Asghari, disappeared while in Istanbul early March. U.S. and Iran had first formal contact in 2 years at 11 March security conference in Baghdad. Dispute over financing stalled Russia's construction work on nuclear plant at Bushehr.

- [“Iran questions EU's ‘illogical’ support for Britain over sailors”](#), RFE/RL, 1 Apr. 2007.
- [“Hostages to fortune”](#), *Economist*, 29 Mar. 2007.
- [“Iran halts some nuclear cooperation”](#), AP, 25 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, [Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?](#), 23 Feb. 2006.

➤ Iraq U.S. military surge brought reduced violence but suicide bombings continued and month-end saw renewed Shiite retaliation for Sunni attacks. Over 70 killed by blasts 24 March, day after Deputy PM Salam Zaubai injured in bombing in Baghdad in which 9 died. 2 truck bombs hit markets in northern Tal Afar town 27 March, killing 60 and prompting Shiite police to go on revenge shooting spree, killing 70. Tensions mounted in Kirkuk ahead of proposed late 2007 referendum to determine whether governorate will be assimilated into semi-autonomous Kurdish region; 3 car bombs exploded 19 March.

U.S. House of Representatives voted 23 March by narrow margin to impose August 2008 deadline for U.S. withdrawal; Senate voted in favour of target date of March 2008; U.S. President Bush promised to veto any bill setting withdrawal timetable. Government announced plans to allow former Baath party members to return to official posts with 3-month period for ex-members to be challenged, after which they will be immune from prosecution for events during Saddam era. Baghdad security conference held 11 March for Iraq's interested parties in step towards Baker/Hamilton-recommended regional diplomatic engagement.

- [“Progressing toward national reconciliation”](#), RFE/RL, 30 Mar. 2007.
- [“Mugged by reality”](#), *Economist*, 22 Mar. 2007.
- Comment by Joost Hiltermann (Crisis Group), [“Why ‘soft partition’ of Iraq won't work”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°60, [After Baker-Hamilton: What to Do in Iraq](#), 19 Dec. 2006; and N°56, [Iraq and the Kurds: The Brewing Battle over Kirkuk](#), 18 July 2006.

➤ Saudi Arabia Riyadh continued to increase profile in regional affairs following 8 February Mecca agreement. Iranian President Ahmedi-Nejad visited early March in indication both sides want to reduce sectarian divisions, nuclear tensions and divergence over Lebanon and Iraq. Arab League summit recommitted to 2002 Saudi peace initiative 28 March.

- [“Arab leaders relaunch peace plan”](#), BBC, 28 Mar. 2007.

➤ Yemen 2 foreign students killed by Shiite rebel attack on religious school in restive northern region 26 March. Battles between followers of deceased radical Shiite leader Hussein al-Houthi and government troops continued. Ali Mohammed Mujur named new PM 31 March after resignation of Abdul-Kader Bajammal.

- [“Yemen names new prime minister after predecessor's resignation”](#), AP, 31 Mar. 2007.
- [“Yemen says Shiite rebels have killed a British and a French student”](#), AP, 26 Mar. 2007.

NORTH AFRICA

➤ Algeria Further rebel attacks launched as security forces continued anti-terrorist operations. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for deadly bomb attack on bus carrying workers for Russian pipeline construction firm in Medea 3 March. 7 policemen reportedly killed in ambush in Tizi Ouzou and 2 militants killed while trying to place bomb east of capital. Clashes in Bouira, M'sila, Ain Defla and Skikida regions killed at least 3 soldiers and 17 suspected militants. Batna court sentenced 2 former senior leaders of Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat to death in absentia 17 March.

- [“Top Algeria rebels get death sentence in absentia”](#), AlertNet, 18 Mar. 2007.
- [“Algeria president plays down rebel attacks”](#), AlertNet, 15 Mar. 2007.
- 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 Constitutional changes approved by parliament on 19 March called into question by low-turnout for 26 March "lightening" referendum. Government said 27% of registered voters turned out, and 76% approved measures; democracy activists cited only 5% turnout. Muslim Brotherhood boycotted poll; rights organisations warned changes billed as reform in fact constitutionally enshrined emergency rule. Series of opposition activist arrests in run-up to vote, including at least 28 Muslim Brothers detained 13-15 March.

- "Egypt introduces changes, but much remains the same", *Daily Star*, 30 Mar. 2007.
- "A permanent emergency?", BBC, 27 Mar. 2007.
- "Egypt arrests 18 in Muslim Brotherhood crackdown", AlertNet, 15 Mar. 2007.
- For latest report, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N° 61, *Egypt's Sinai Question*, 30 Jan. 2007.

➤ Mauritania Former finance minister Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi won second round of country's first free and fair presidential elections with 53% of vote 25 March. Opposition figure Ahmed Ould Daddah conceded defeat; Abdallahi to be sworn in 19 April. Both rounds, endorsed by international observers, passed without major incident.

- "Former Mauritanian minister wins landmark presidential vote", *International Herald Tribune*, 25 Mar. 2007.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°53, *Political Transition in Mauritania: Results and Prospects*, 24 Apr. 2006.

➤ Morocco Authorities pledged to pursue war against terrorism "without respite" after formerly convicted terrorist Abdelfattah Raydi blew himself up in internet café in Casablanca slum 11 March after discovered to be accessing terrorist sites. Security officials believe Raydi and 12 others planned to blow up foreign ships at Casablanca port and tourist facilities in Agadir, Marrakech and Essaouira; 24 suspects arrested in connection.

- "Terror plot to target tourists in Morocco is foiled", *Scotsman*, 26 Mar. 2007.
- "Bombers planned to blow up ships in Morocco –papers", AlertNet, 22 Mar. 2007.

➤ Western Sahara Arrests of Saharawi independence activists continued while Moroccan delegation briefed European officials on "negotiated autonomy" plan. Moroccan police violently suppressed unarmed protest by Saharawi students outside Qadi Ayad University in Marrakech 15 March, injuring 10. El Aaiún appeals court sentenced 8 political detainees to prison 20 March. Mandate of UN mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara to expire 30 April.

- "Condenados ocho independentistas saharauis a penas de hasta tres años", *El País*, 22 Mar. 2007.
- "Moroccan police beat Saharawi demonstrators", *International Herald Tribune*, 15 Mar. 2007.
- "Morocco plays on terror fears in Sahara peace bid", *Guardian*, 13 Mar. 2007.

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