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Russia and the West: ten disputes and an inevitable escalation?

Author: Maxime Lefebvre



Has Russia become a threat to European security? The answer has to be considered carefully, as the Europeans are about to revise their 2003 Security Strategy. The Ukrainian conflict is rather the expression of the paroxysmal exasperation of an increasingly fierce confrontation between Russia and the West. It highlights how the geopolitical tectonic plates have been at work since the redefinition of the borders at the end of the Cold War. A true process of confrontation has developed over a quarter of a century, in which international power struggles have interacted with motivating forces in Russia, as well as in Western societies. Explaining the causal sequence is not justified, but helps us understand, and

understanding is vital if we are to act and define a strategy. For convenience sake let us describe a series of ten disputes, starting with Chechnya ending with Russia's intervention in Syria.

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Elections :

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa elected President of Portugal in the first round



Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, supported by the PSD and the People's Party (PP), was elected President of the Republic of Portugal in the first round of voting on 24th January with 52% of the vote. He will be taking over from Anibal Cavaco-Silva on 9th March... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

Governing in the era of Big Data



On 27th January the "Institut de l'Entreprise" is organising a breakfast debate at the "Maison de la Chimie" on the theme "Governing in the era of Big Data - promises and dangers of government algorithmic action". Anne-Marie Idrac, the Foundation's Deputy Chair will be giving a speech... [Read more](#)

Publication of the 3rd edition of the Atlas of the European Union



The third edition of the Atlas of the European Union has just been published in paper and digital form. The work presents the Union, its institutions, its 28 Member States and a novelty - their overseas territories. Order now if you want to know everything there is to know about Europe!... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

Reduction in IMF forecasts



On 19th January the IMF noted the slow rate of growth in the world's economy and revised its forecasts downwards - now a usual exercise - in its latest "World Economic Outlook"... [Read more](#)

World unemployment is due to rise in 2016 and 2017



In spite of a drop in unemployment in some developed countries, the International Labour Organisation said on 19th January that the world employment crisis is far from over... [Read more](#)

Migration :

Frontex observed 610,000 migrants crossing the Western Balkans



In a report published on 19th January Frontex, the European agency responsible for operational cooperation on the EU's external borders observed 610, 000 illegal border crossings in the Western Balkan region in the third quarter of 2015... [Read more](#)

IMF Report on the economic impact of the influx of refugees into Europe



In a report published on 20th January experts at the IMF provide elements of response to the economic effect of the influx of refugees. They plead for a "rapid" integration of the latter onto the labour market, without denying however that the task is of size... [Read more](#)

Reducing the numbers of migrants in Germany



On 20th January Angela Merkel stated that she intended to reduce the number of migrants in Germany, without establishing quotas however... [Read more](#)

Austria limits its reception of migrants



On 20th January Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann decided to reduce the number of asylum seekers taken in 2016 to 37,500, a threshold that would be reached "before the summer".. [Read more](#)

David Cameron: learning English obligatory for visa renewals



On 18th January the British Prime Minister David Cameron explained that "passive tolerance" had to be brought to end that had allowed various communities to become isolated across the country... [Read more](#)



Slovenia threatens to toughen up on border controls



On 18th January Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar deplored the lack of solidarity shown by European countries in the face of the migratory crisis and the lack of action undertaken by the EU to help countries in difficulty... [Read more](#)



Commission :

The Commission improves criminal data sharing



The European Commission announced on 19th January that it wanted to extend the European Criminal Record Information System to non-European citizens... [Read more](#)



Towards improved acknowledgement of qualifications in Europe



On 18th January the European professional card entered into force. This allows some professionals (nurses, GPs, pharmacists, physiotherapists, real-estate agents and mountain guides) to exercise their profession in another Member State of the EU, as long as their qualifications are acknowledged there... [Read more](#)



EU-Turkey meeting



The head of European diplomacy, Federica Mogherini, called on 25th January for an immediate cease-fire in the south east of Turkey between the Turkish forces and the Kurds... [Read more](#)



Parliament :

For a better application of the mutual defence clause



According to a resolution adopted on 21st January MEPs hope for an improvement of the application of the mutual defence clause that was called upon for the first time by France after the attacks in Paris... [Read more](#)



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Annual report on the Union's competition policy



During the plenary session of European Parliament on 19th January MEPs adopted the annual report on competition within the Union... [Read more](#)



The European Parliament wants a full explanation of car emissions



On 21st January MEPs appointed the 45 members of the Committee of Inquiry into the infringements of the EU's rules regarding car emissions... [Read more](#)



MEPs suggest compensating States that suffer the consequences of tax optimisation



On 19th January MEPs adopted a resolution 500 votes in support, 137 against and 73 abstentions that aims to compensate Member States that suffer the consequences of tax optimisation... [Read more](#)



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Agreement on trade in services



The report on the agreement on the trade of services prepared by MEP Viviane Reding (EPP) was adopted 33 votes in support, 6 against, during a vote at the trade committee on 18th January. MEPs have asked the European Commission to ensure that public procurement of third countries are open to European businesses. They have also asked for public services and audiovisual services to be excluded from liberalisation... [Read more](#)

Council :

Informal Justice/Internal Affairs Council



On 25th January 2016 the informal Justice/Internal Affairs Council took place in Amsterdam. This led to an assessment by the ministers of the means available to the EU to strengthen the Schengen Area and to discuss the joint management of the external borders. Some countries said they supported the activation of article 26 of the Schengen Border Code enabling the extension of the period regarding the temporary control of the borders. Finally the 28 Ministers looked into the implementation of a new coast and border guard corps both by national authorities and the European agencies as part of the control of land and maritime borders... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Conclusions of the EU/Armenia Meeting



On 18th January during the 6th meeting of the Cooperation Council between Armenia and the EU, it was asked that work should continue, notably the strengthening of the rule of law, the fight to counter corruption and the revision of the electoral system... [Read more](#)

ECB :

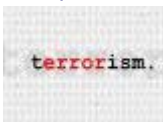
ECB Governors Council



The ECB Council of Governors met on 21st January and decided not to change the key rates. During the press conference its President, Mario Draghi, indicated that the ECB would continue its accommodating monetary policy in order to help the recovery of economic growth... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

European Counter Terrorism Centre



On 25th January the Counter Terrorism Centre was inaugurated within Europol in the Hague with the aim of improving information sharing and the coordination of anti-terrorist operations... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Meeting between German Chancellor and Turkish Prime Minister over migrants



During a meeting between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu on 22nd January in Berlin the latter pointed to the Turkish government's commitment to doing everything it could to reduce the number of illegal migrants in the near future... [Read more](#)

Croatia :

The new Croatian government sworn in by Parliament



On 22nd January the Croatian Parliament swore in the government, 83 votes in support out of a possible 151, led by independent Prime Minister Tihomir Oreskovic, a financial expert who announced that "difficult decisions" lay ahead to repair the fragile economy and also to overcome the migratory crisis... [Read more](#)

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Spain :

Mariano Rajoy gives up trying to form a government



On 22nd January the outgoing head of the Spanish government, Mariano Rajoy relinquished in his bid to form a government due to a lack of support in the Congress of Deputies. The Socialists have not come to any agreement with Podemos... [Read more](#)

France :

Anti-Daesh Coalition



French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian brought together his American, European and Australian counterparts on 20th January to confirm their anti-Daesh strategy and to discuss the means to step up the offensive against the terrorist group... [Read more](#)

Poland :

Discussions with the Polish authorities regarding the rule of law



On 18th January Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, and Andrzej Duda, the Polish President, spoke about political developments in Poland and the responses caused by this across Europe. On 19th January MEPs debated the situation of the rule of law in Poland with Beata Szydlo, the Polish Prime Minister... [Read more](#)

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Romania :

Romanian Prime Minister Dacian Ciolos visits France



French President François Hollande hosted Romanian Prime Minister Dacian Ciolos on 20th January, notably to discuss migration and the future of the Schengen area... [Read more](#)

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Moldova :

New government in Moldova



In Moldova the appointment on 20th January of a new Prime Minister, Pavel Filip, led to demonstrations as the population rejected the political classes, corruption and the power of the oligarchs... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

Ukraine extends its embargo targeting Russian products



[more](#)

On 20th January Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk announced that the country would be adding more than 70 types of goods to its list of products that were already banned in Ukraine in a further chapter in the trade war between the two countries... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

The Council of Europe concerned about the extension of the state of emergency in France



The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, expressed his concern to French President François Hollande on 22nd January regarding the extension of the state of emergency which was decreed after the terrorist attacks on Paris... [Read more](#)

New President of the Parliamentary Assembly



Pedro Agramunt (EPP/DC Spain) was elected President of the PACE on 25th January for a mandate of one year that is renewable once. He will be taking over from Anne Brasseur who has occupied this post since January 2014... [Read more](#)

Aviation :

Alliance between five European airlines



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Five European airlines (Air France-KLM, IAG, the parent company of British Airways, Iberia, Lufthansa, EasyJet and Ryanair) announced on 20th January that they were forming an alliance to put pressure on the authorities and to improve their competitiveness, via a reduction in charges in a context of fierce competition, notably from companies in the Gulf... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Annual inflation up to 0.2%



According to a Eurostat publication on 19th January the euro zone's annual inflation rate and that of the EU were up by 0.2% each in December 2015... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Publication of the 2015 report on employment and the social situation in Europe



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On 21st January the European Commission published its report on employment and the social situation in the EU in 2015. It notably emerges that entrepreneurship is one of the main drivers of job creation... [Read more](#)

Results of the study on bank loans in the euro zone



On 19th January the ECB published the results of the study on bank loans in the euro zone for the period covering the 4th quarter of 2015... [Read more](#)

The Davos World Economic Forum ends



The World Economic Forum of Davos came to an end on 23rd January. Economic recovery and the terrorist threat were the focus of debate. A study notes the main European issues of 2016-2017... [Read more](#)

Concern over the arrest of Europeans in China



The EU should impose "sanctions" against the Chinese State media declared the NGO Reporters without Borders on 21st January, which denounces their involvement in the recent "forced confessions" of campaigners and journalists being held in China... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Venice Carnival will take place from 30th January to 9th February 2016



From 30th January to 9th February 2016 one of the oldest and best known European events will be taking place in Italy - the Venice Carnival. Several events, like the costume competition, masked balls, as well as parades on the canals will be taking place... [Read more](#)

The Antiques Fair of Belgium



Brussels will be hosting the BRAFA until 31st January - this is one of the most prestigious art and antiques fairs, where everything that on show is for sale, from antiquity to the 21st century... [Read more](#)

Bettina Rheims Exhibition at the Maison européenne de la photographie



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From 28th January to 27th March the "Maison européenne de la photographie" is hosting the work of French photographer Bettina Rheims. Femininity is the leitmotif of this exhibition comprising 180 photographs... [Read more](#)

Exhibition of the 21er Haus of Vienna



From 28th January to 29th May the Museum for Contemporary Art of Vienna, the 21er Haus, is hosting an exhibition on post-war constructive, conceptual and real art... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



25th-26th January

Amsterdam

Informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers



25th to 29th January

Strasbourg

Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe



27th and 28th January

Amsterdam

Informal Competitiveness Ministers Meeting

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