

1 June 2006, N°34

CrisisWatch:

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

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

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Africa

CENTRAL AFRICA

➡ Burundi Replacing Tanzania, new South African mediator Nqakula visited President Nkurunziza and FNL rebel representatives in Bujumbura early May. Stalled government-FNL talks began in Dar es Salaam 29 May. But overall political situation in country deteriorated. Ruling CNDD-FDD party faced growing accusations of corruption and authoritarianism. Freedom of expression an issue as former MP/peace activist Terence Nahimana, who left FNL political wing in 1990, arrested for “compromising state security” after questioning government’s tactics delaying peace negotiations.

- “Government, rebel group begin peace talks”, IRIN, 29 May 2006.
- “Free expression under threat”, Human Rights Watch, 19 May 2006.
- 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 3,000 marched in Bangui against increasing violence in northwest and bad governance.

- “Thousands protest widespread violence”, IRIN, 19 May 2006.

➡ Democratic Republic of Congo Tensions increased substantially in Kinshasa as a third of 33 presidential candidates called for new electoral commission head and talks to renegotiate 30 July election date. Government cracked down on opposition as forces loyal to President Kabila harassed other candidates, and restrictions placed on 3 radio stations for inflammatory broadcasts. 10,000 Kabila supporters marched in Kinshasa 31 May against opposition call for negotiations. 52 rebels, 6 government soldiers, 1 UN peacekeeper killed in clashes in Ituri, where joint DRC-MONUC operation continued to flush out illegal armed groups responsible for near-daily attacks. FDLR rebels attacked 2 villages and army base in North Kivu. In Katanga, Mai Mai warlord Gedeon Kyungu and 350 fighters surrendered to take part in DDR program.

- “Coup crackdown a show of force”, *Mail & Guardian*, 26 May 2006.
- “Militia attacks spread terror in DRC in run-up to polls”, *Mail & Guardian*, 11 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Reports N°108, *Congo’s Elections: Making or Breaking the Peace*, 27 Apr. 2006; and N°104, *Security Sector Reform in the Congo*, 13 Feb. 2006.

➡ Rwanda Government published list of 171 genocide suspects said to be abroad. Despite cool relations with Uganda, President Kagame attended Museveni’s presidential inauguration. 800 of 20,000 Rwandans, who feared local gacaca courts, returned after Burundi refused asylum.

- “Who gave Rwandan rebels Ugandan passports?”, *The Monitor*, 15 May 2006.
- “Govt publishes list of genocide suspects still on the ‘run’”, *Hirondelle*, 11 May 2006.

➡ 🇺🇬 Uganda LRA announced ready for talks during

meetings with southern Sudanese SPLM, presenting real possibility for breakthrough. But President Museveni at odds with International Criminal Court, after giving LRA leader Kony until August to end 20-year insurgency and saying would guarantee safety. Senior U.S. diplomat said new Bush administration priority to “get rid” of LRA by end 2006. Museveni and parliament officially took office mid-month after February election, as controversial treason trial for opposition leader and presidential runner-up Besigye continued.

- “Uganda, rebel LRA to start talks next week in Sudan’s Juba”, *Sudan Tribune*, 1 June 2006.
- “Uganda swears in first multi-party parliament in 20 years”, *Mail & Guardian*, 16 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°35, *A Strategy for Ending Northern Uganda’s Crisis*, 11 Jan. 2006.

HORN OF AFRICA

➡ Chad Despite rebel threats of violence, peaceful presidential elections held 3 May. President Déby reelected with 65% of vote; opposition boycotted, claiming poll rigged. Mid-month Chad accused Sudan of organising new alliance of Chadian rebels to oust Déby, called on international community to intervene. Security situation in east dire as armed raiders from Darfur, including Janjaweed militias, forced thousands to flee and threatened aid workers.

- “Deby win confirmed, but revised down to 64.67 pct”, IRIN, 29 May 2006.
- “Sudanese militia massacre Chadian civilians”, Human Rights Watch, 26 May 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°111, *Chad: Back Toward War?*, 1 June 2006. The internal situation in Chad is deteriorating rapidly, and spill-over from the Darfur crisis is only part of the reason. Sudan’s deliberate use of Chadian warlords in its counter-insurgency strategy in Darfur and as a tool in its attempts to topple President Idriss Déby is just one aspect of Chad’s woes. The ever deeper convergence of the two crises underlines the difficulty of settling one independently of the other. But Chad’s troubles are equally the result of Déby’s brittle semi-authoritarian regime, and the charade of the 3 May presidential election only made things worse. The April 2006 rebel offensive brought Chad to the brink of all-out civil war. The victory Déby ultimately achieved in pushing rebels back from the gates of the capital, N’Djamena, settled nothing militarily and highlighted the political fragility of the regime.



➡ Ethiopia Alliance for Freedom and Democracy created 22 May in Netherlands, including diaspora members of 5 different groups united by opposition to government. Latest in series of unexplained explosions killed 4 in Addis Ababa 12 May and injured 42 in Jijiga 29 May. Government nominated interim city council to run Addis Ababa after April failure by CUD opposition to fill positions to run administration, prompting CUD parliament walkout. Treason and genocide trial for 111 opposition leaders continued.

- “At least 42 wounded in Ethiopian blasts”, *Mail & Guardian*, 29 May 2006.
- “Ethiopia party in rebel alliance”, BBC, 22 May 2006.

➡ Ethiopia/Eritrea UN extended UNMEE peacekeeping mandate for 4 months 31 May but nearly halved number of authorised troops, after Boundary Commission talks 18-19

May in London failed to break deadlock. Ethiopia dropped longstanding precondition of further negotiation before border demarcation can start, demanding instead Eritrea withdraw militias from Temporary Security Zone.

- [“U.N. trims peacekeeping force in Ethiopia, Eritrea”](#), AlertNet, 31 May 2006.
- [“US to blame for border stalemate - Afwerki”](#), IRIN, 25 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°101, [Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War](#), 22 Dec. 2005.

☞ Somalia Heavy fighting between Islamic Courts militia and U.S.-backed Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism spread throughout Mogadishu, after collapse of temporary ceasefire that ended 7-14 May clashes; over 200 killed in month. Alliance accused Courts of links to al-Qaeda, while Courts accused U.S. of funnelling cash to warlords. PM Gedi gave 3 cabinet ministers (also Alliance members in Mogadishu) until early June to come to Baidoa or face dismissal, while cabinet supported inviting Ugandan and Sudanese peacekeepers to improve security. UN Security Council monitoring group reported weapons inflow from increasing number of states, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Italy and Saudi Arabia; all denied violating embargo.

- [“Somali Islamists seize rival base”](#), BBC, 31 May 2006.
- [“U.S. secretly backing warlords in Somalia”](#), *Washington Post*, 17 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°100, [Somalia’s Islamists](#), 12 Dec. 2005.

☞ Somaliland (Somalia) Somaliland celebrated fifteenth anniversary of self-declared independence from Somalia 18 May. President Royale held talks with AU Commission Chairman Konare on request for AU admission; visited Ethiopia to discuss growing bilateral ties. Somali transitional parliament condemned Ethiopian trade liaison office in Hargeysa. In contentious move, government extended term of council elders (upper house) to 2010 with endorsement of constitutional court, bypassing legislature. 11 killed in fighting between rival subclans in Buhoodhle district.

- [“Somaliland president sacks minister over police protests”](#), Reuters, 30 May 2006.
- [“Controversy over extension of elders’ term of office”](#), IRIN, 16 May 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°110, [Somaliland: Time for African Union Leadership](#), 23 May 2006. The dispute between Somaliland and Somalia will become an increasing source of friction, and possibly violence, unless the AU engages in preventive diplomacy. The self-declared Republic of Somaliland is marking 15 years since it proclaimed independence from Somalia. If Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government expands its authority across the shattered country, the dispute over Somaliland’s status is likely to increase bilateral tensions. The AU should appoint a Special Envoy to consult all relevant parties and report on the legal, security and political dimensions of the dispute and offer options for solutions within 6 months. Its Peace and Security Council should organise an informal consultation round with eminent scholars, political analysts and legal experts. Pending final resolution of the dispute, Somaliland should be granted interim observer status at the AU.



☞ Sudan Under intense international pressure, government and largest SLA rebel faction led by Minawi signed Darfur Peace

Agreement 5 May in Abuja. Plan calls for creation of temporary regional authority with rebel participation, Janjaweed disarmament, incorporation of rebels into army and Sudanese government funds for reconstruction and compensation. But SLA faction headed by Abdel Wahid and smaller JEM rebel group refused to sign, despite AU urging to do so by 31 May or face possible sanctions. UN Security Council unanimously passed 16 May resolution under Chapter VII supporting peace plan and created team to assess transfer of AU mission to UN, despite Khartoum’s ongoing opposition to UN force. Violent demonstrations by refugees protesting agreement and calling for international protection: AU interpreter killed during UN humanitarian chief Egeland visit to Kalma camp, South Darfur. Rebels accused government of attacking villages in South Darfur, killing dozens. In southeastern state Jonglei, several killed in clashes between SPLA and armed civilians of Lou Nuer community over forced disarmament.

- [“Split between rebels undercuts Darfur pact”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 31 May 2006.
- Comment by Suliman Baldo (Crisis Group), [“Darfur’s peace plan: The view from the ground”](#), openDemocracy, 24 May 2006.
- For background on Darfur, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°106, [Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement: The Long Road Ahead](#), 31 Mar. 2006.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

☞ Swaziland Major donor EU announced suspension of direct funding to pressure government to practice good governance and accountability.

- [“Unfriendly media laws reviewed”](#), Media Institute of Southern Africa, 16 May 2006.

☞ Zimbabwe Opposition continued to rally support as government maintained crackdown on protests. Decisive win by main faction of opposition MDC led by Tsvangirai in 21 May Harare by-election over ruling ZANU-PF and smaller MDC faction. Police banned rallies marking first anniversary of Operation Murambatsvina throughout country, arrested 100. Leaked draft of suspected UN initiative on Mugabe succession failed to have impact; government blocked UNSG Annan’s proposed July trip to Harare. Economic crisis deepened as inflation topped 1000%.

- [“Mugabe moves ‘to crush dissenting views’”](#), *Mail & Guardian*, 31 May 2006.
- [“Annan studies Zimbabwe crisis; official calls Mugabe retirement talk ‘premature’”](#), Voice of America, 25 May 2006.
- For most recent report, see Africa Report N°97, [Zimbabwe’s Operation Murambatsvina: The Tipping Point?](#), 17 Aug. 2005; for background, see Africa Report N°93, [Post-Election Zimbabwe: What Next?](#), 7 June 2005.

WEST AFRICA

☞ Côte d’Ivoire Twin processes of ex-rebel disarmament and voter identification underway in preparation for October elections. Disarmament pre-regroupment phase will see combatants return to barracks. Government offices began 1-week trial phase to identify estimated 3 million Ivorians without identity papers.

- [“Bid to hand out ID cards ahead key vote kicks off”](#), IRIN, 18 May 2006.

- [“Combatants begin pullback in first step to disarmament”](#), IRIN, 23 May 2006.

Crisis Group Africa Report N°109, *Côte d'Ivoire: Peace as an Option*, 17 May 2006. With progress towards presidential elections, meant to occur before 31 October, the four-year crisis in Côte d'Ivoire could finally end. However, no political actors have yet given up the capacity for violence or committed themselves irrevocably to elections they may lose. The government should embark on a nationwide campaign to inform the public of necessary preparations, including identifying citizens entitled to vote and disarming and reintegrating ex-combatants. Major donor support is needed for all these steps. PM Banny should continue an inclusive dialogue with all political actors and social sectors to mobilise opinion behind the government and should continue working with President Gbagbo, who may be tempted to delay elections to prolong his power.



- ↳ Guinea President Conté reshuffled cabinet, appointing loyal allies, and cancelled planned medical trip to Switzerland. Social unrest continued as government's announcement of petrol price hike led unions to call for general strike early June.
 - [“Conte reshuffles government, gives trusted aide top job”](#), IRIN, 30 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°37, *Guinea in Transition*, 11 Apr. 2006.
- ↳ Liberia Demonstration by armed men, many ex-combatants, in Ganta forced inhabitants to flee, after rumours ethnic Mandingo refugees would return to Nimba county and reclaim lands by force. UNMIL forces intervened to stem further unrest. Government reported improvement in fiscal management as part of crackdown on corruption. ECOWAS called for UN to lift sanctions on diamonds and timber.
 - [“What's happening in Nimba?”](#), *Inquirer*, 29 May 2006.
 - [“Ethnic tension high as returnees claim homes, land”](#), IRIN, 22 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 Apr. 2006; and Briefing N°36, *Liberia: Staying Focused*, 13 Jan. 2006.
- ↳ Mali Tuareg rebels occupied 2 military bases in north eastern town of Kidal 23 May, and reportedly stole military equipment before retreating. Government forces retook control but growing tensions in town prompted fears of more violence.
 - [“Mali rebels say fighting to save nomadic culture”](#), AlertNet, 29 May 2006.
 - [“Tuareg rebels' attack Mali army”](#), BBC, 23 May 2006.
- ↳ Nigeria Affirmation of constitutional process as President Obasanjo announced would step down in 2007 after senate rejected constitutional amendment to allow controversial third term. Obasanjo later reshuffled senior security staff. Shell refused to pay \$1.5 billion environmental damages to Ijaw community in Niger Delta, as ordered by court in February, pending appeal. Violence continued in region, with alleged militants killing U.S. oil worker and 6 police in separate incidents, as Ijaw rebel groups threatened joint attacks.
 - [“A huge ‘no’ to Africa's big-man politics”](#), *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 May 2006.
 - [“Shell contests huge Nigeria fine”](#), BBC, 22 May 2006.

- ↳ Sierra Leone Transfer of former Liberian President Taylor to The Hague on hold as no country willing to house him if convicted. Justice George Gelaga King from Sierra Leone elected to succeed Justice Fernando as president of Special Court. Presidential candidates began to prepare for 2007 elections; police announced impartiality.
 - [“In the court room - the state of the courts today”](#), *Standard Times*, 18 May 2006.
 - [“Taylor prison location holding up trial”](#), IRIN, 4 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 Dec. 2004.

Asia/Pacific

CENTRAL ASIA

- ↳ Kazakhstan “For a Just Kazakhstan” opposition alliance activist Zhumabaev sentenced to 5 years prison on charges of causing civil disorder 15 May. Alliance also alleged leader Zhaiyanov prevented by authorities from travelling to Astana to meet visiting U.S. Vice President Cheney.
 - [“Apparent rift opens within Nazarbaev family”](#), RFE/RL, 19 May 2006.
 - [“Cheney visit spotlights pivotal Kazakh role”](#), ISN, 9 May 2006.
- ↳ Kyrgyzstan President Bakiev rejected resignations of 13 ministers after parliamentary resolution criticised cabinet, but he later made series of senior appointments to government and administration 10 May. Same day alleged organised crime boss, and winner of April parliamentary by-election, Ryspek Akmatbayev shot dead by unknown assailants: supporters called for resignation of PM and deputy interior minister but backed down after meeting Bakiev. Gunmen from Tajikistan breached border, clashing with Tajik and Kyrgyz border guards 12 May: 13 reported dead. Authorities linked attack to Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Government concern over Islamic radicalism appeared connected to arrests of influential clergymen and moratorium on activity of Tabligh movement in Batken province. “For Reform!” movement held large demonstration 27 May, demanding progress on reform and against corruption.
 - [“Kyrgyzstan's leaders face pressure from multiple sources”](#), Eurasia Insight, 26 May 2006.
 - [“Kyrgyz-Tajik border raid stokes fears”](#), IWPR, 19 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°109, *Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State*, 16 Dec. 2005.
- ↳ Tajikistan Islamic Renaissance party said government targeting members after activist died in police custody 4 May; 3 police officers arrested in connection with death. Gunmen breached border and entered Kyrgyzstan, clashing with Tajik and Kyrgyz border guards; 13 reported dead. Authorities linked attack to Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and stepped up border security.
 - [“President Rahmonov is taking no re-election chances”](#), Eurasianet, 17 May 2006.
 - [“Clock ticking for Tajik opposition campaign”](#), IWPR, 12 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°33, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?*, 19 May 2004.

➤ Turkmenistan Central Bank Chairman Jumaniyaz Annaorazov dismissed 12 May; observers connected recent high turnover in Bank leadership with investigations into dubious gas deals. EU Parliament delayed decision on trade deal with Turkmenistan to July.

- [“Turkmenistan’s hidden travails”](#), openDemocracy, 9 May 2006.
- [“Proposed EU deal sparks criticism”](#), ISN, 2 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°85, [Repression and Regression in Turkmenistan: A New International Strategy](#), 4 Nov. 2004.

➤ Uzbekistan Anniversary of 2005 Andijan massacre marked by demonstrations outside country including by exiles on Kyrgyz side of border 3 May. Government released video depicting event as Islamic militant uprising; EU condemned continuing resistance to independent inquiry. Court rejected appeal by rights activist Mutabar Tojiboyeva, arrested after Andijan, against 8-year sentence. Opposition activist Nodira Hidoyatova released from prison after sentence suspended.

- Comment by Andrew Stroehlein (Crisis Group), [“We must prepare for the coming crisis in Uzbekistan”](#), *Financial Times*, 12 May 2006.
- [“Uzbekistan’s relentless downward slide”](#), IWPR, 12 May 2006.
- Crisis Group media release, [“One Year after the Massacre in Andijan”](#), 10 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°45, [Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul](#), 16 Feb. 2006.

SOUTH ASIA

➤ Afghanistan Month saw worst violence since 2001, while in Kabul new parliament asserted its authority. 350 insurgents, civilians and security personnel killed across southern provinces. Resurgent Taliban used large units, reportedly teaming up with drug traffickers and other anti-government elements, to attack coalition troops and Afghan security forces. U.S. military-truck accident in Kabul 29 May sparked mass anti-U.S. riots, killing 8. UK began deployment of 3,500 troops as part of NATO-led peacekeeping expansion in south and formally assumed command from U.S.-led troops in Helmand 1 May. 20 members of new cabinet, including ministers of defence, foreign affairs, interior and finance, sworn in 2 May after approved by parliament; 5 positions remain to be filled. Parliament rejected renomination of conservative head of Supreme Court, seen as major impediment to judicial reform.

- [“Afghanistan, unraveling”](#), *New York Times*, 1 June 2006.
- [“Afghan parliament rejects prez nominee for Supreme Court chief justice”](#), *Boston Herald* (AP), 27 May 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°116, [Afghanistan’s New Legislature: Making Democracy Work](#), 15 May 2006. The fledgling National Assembly can play a vital role in stabilising Afghanistan and holding President Karzai’s administration accountable by giving voice to the country’s diverse population. The parliament has potential to draw the regions to the centre in an unprecedented way but if it is considered impotent, citizens are likely to lose faith in democratisation. Unfortunately the Karzai administration appears to calculate that a weak, fragmented body would mean more power for itself rather than a loss for the country.



➤ Bangladesh Dispute over Election Commission continued. Supreme Court rejected draft voter list published by Commission while Bureau of Statistics stated list contains extra 11 million voters, leading to opposition Awami League (AL) demonstrations against “election engineering”. Separate AL protests demanded end to water and power shortages. Journalists in Kushtia reportedly attacked by cadres of ruling BNP. 2 leaders of banned Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen group, and 10 accomplices sentenced to death for November 2005 murder of 2 judges.

- [“Heinous attack on journalists”](#), *Daily Star*, 31 May 2006.
- [“One dead after Bangladesh protest”](#), BBC, 23 May 2006.

➤ India (non-Kashmir) Maoist violence and religious clashes continued. Maoists attacked refugee camp in Chhattisgarh killing 4 surrendered rebels 13 May. 12 killed by suspected Maoist landmine in Maharashtra state 16 May. Hindu-Muslim clashes in Uttar Pradesh state killed 2 after local BJP leader shot dead 28 May, while 7 killed in western Gujarat state after authorities tried to demolish Muslim shrine in Vadodara 1 May. “Positive” talks between New Delhi and northeastern National Socialist Council of Nagaland (IM) rebels 18 May; next round within month. Talks with National Democratic Front of Bodoland rebels 27 May led to 6-month ceasefire extension.

- [“Curfew continues in Aligarh, police official removed”](#), Outlook India (PTI), 30 May 2006.
- [“NSCN-IM talks in Amsterdam end on positive note”](#), newKerala (IANS), 21 May 2006.
- [“Northeast echoes”](#), *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 23 May 2006.

➤ Kashmir Violence continued in Indian-controlled Kashmir in apparent reaction to positive talks between Indian PM Singh and main moderate faction of APHC that set up unprecedented framework for future talks. Violence increased before 24-25 May roundtable in Srinagar with grenade attacks and suicide bomber killing 15. Militants attacked Congress party rally in Srinagar while warning given to APHC of “dire consequences” for participation in roundtable prompting APHC withdrawal 22 May. Police reportedly found bodies of 4 Muslims in Baramulla district, allegedly killed for being police informers. Separate India/Pakistan talks on Siachen glacier and Sir Creek border disputes ended without breakthrough.

- [“Kashmir attack overshadows rivals’ anti-terror talk”](#), AlertNet, 31 May 2006.
- [“Indian PM sees ‘ray of hope’ after Kashmir talks”](#), *The Scotsman*, 25 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°79, [India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps toward Peace](#), 24 June 2004.

➤ Maldives Police clashed with opposition MDP demonstrators calling on President Gayoom to remove 29 unelected members of law-making chambers. Over 100 reportedly arrested, prompting EU call for more accommodating approach to opposition. MDP chair Nasheed trial on terrorism and sedition charges resumed 28 May.

- [“Maldivian government calls on MDP to ditch militancy for diplomacy”](#), newKerala, 29 May 2006.
- [“Arrests ‘cast serious doubts on commitment to reform’ - EU”](#), Minivan news, 28 May 2006.

➤ Nepal New government and Maoists met for first peace talks since 2003. Sides agreed to ceasefire and code of conduct

which commits both to multi-party system, elections for constituent assembly and end to provocations. Talks due early June. Previously government dropped terrorism charges against Maoists and released hundreds from prison. Parliament voted unanimously to restrict royal powers 18 May, putting Nepal Army under control of parliament, calling for royal family to pay taxes, parliament to name heir to throne and country to be secular state - but did not abolish monarchy. 18 members of PM Girija Prasad Koirala's cabinet named after intense internal debate. Government scrapped curbs on press freedom and NGOs, and set up panel to investigate excesses of royal government. 9 top security officials suspended, but not head of army. Major OHCHR report released 25 May, detailing torture, illegal detention and suspected mass murder carried out by former Royal Nepal Army in 2003.

- ["Nepal mulls UN peace process role"](#), BBC, 30 May 2006.
- ["Army committed to Nepal government"](#), Kantipur Online, 29 May 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°115, [Nepal: From People Power to Peace?](#), 10 May 2006. The defeat of King Gyanendra's absolute rule marks only the first step in Nepal's long road to peace. The pro-democracy movement was a victory not only for the mainstream political parties and their tactical alliance with the Maoist insurgents, but above all for the Nepali people. Donors must now understand their role as one of safeguarding the difficult transition to peace. The interim administration faces 4 immediate challenges: keeping the peace process with the Maoists on track; containing the king and controlling the army; planning for constitutional change; and responding to calls for transitional justice. The outside world must help the government as it tackles these challenges in a precarious environment, and it should coordinate an approach that makes stability and peace the priority.



↳ Pakistan Tensions continued to rise in Balochistan following 8 April government ban of Balochistan Liberation Army. Attacks on gas infrastructure and security forces continued: at least 10 killed in pipeline explosion in Sui; and 8 police in separate attacks. Renewed clashes in and around Miranshah, North Waziristan killed 10 militants and police while 3 pro-government tribal leaders killed in separate incidents. In South Waziristan, 2 officials shot dead by militants 12 May. Former PMs Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif signed "Charter of Democracy" in first attempt to forge common platform against military government.

- ["The way it was: Some call it the Magna Carta"](#), *Daily Times*, 27 May 2006.
- ["Baloch insurgents escalate attacks in Pakistan"](#), ISN (Jamestown Foundation), 24 May 2006.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°46, [Pakistan: Political Impact of the Earthquake](#), 15 Mar. 2006.

↳ Sri Lanka Security continued to deteriorate. Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission admitted "low-intensity war" and ruled government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) violated truce and security forces involved in extrajudicial retaliatory killings of Tamil civilians. Widespread violence included 11 May clash between navies killing 17 sailors and 50 LTTE. Rebels accused military of killing commander in Batticaloa. Attacks also targeted humanitarian workers: employee of Norwegian Refugee Council killed. Rebels and government agreed to talks in Norway to discuss security of peace monitors but LTTE insist not part of peace negotiations.

Donor "Co-chairs" (Japan, U.S., EU, Norway) condemned both sides for deterioration. EU placed LTTE on terrorist list despite earlier rebel warning move would provoke "hardline individualist path".

- ["Co-chairs get tough with LTTE, Lanka"](#), *Hindustan Times*, 30 May 2006.
- ["Between peace and war"](#), openDemocracy, 15 May 2006.

NORTH EAST ASIA

↳ North Korea Nuclear negotiations remained on hold and North-South engagement suffered setback. Pyongyang stopped testing railway reconnection leading Seoul to reconsider cooperation projects. Previously South President Roh Moo-hyun had stated desire to meet Kim Jong-il with offer of increased economic aid. UN resumed limited food aid ending 6-month dispute with government over monitoring of distribution. North's FM Paek Nam-sun visited Beijing 30 May.

- ["North Korea steps up criticism of South"](#), *Boston Globe*, 28 May 2006.
- ["A nuclear test for diplomacy"](#), *Washington Post*, 16 May 2006.
- For most recent report, see Asia Report N°112, [North Korea and China: Comrades Forever?](#), 1 Feb. 2006; for background, see N°108, [North East Asia's Undercurrents of Conflict](#), 15 Dec. 2005.


↳ Taiwan Strait President Chen Shui-bian ceded control of cabinet to PM after scandal involving family member; remains in charge of foreign and defence policy, and ties with China. Taiwan unveiled first formal national security policy 20 May, pledging to increase defence spending by 20% and urging China to cooperate in establishing military buffer zone. Policy asserts China set on long-term military expansion to control Taiwan. According to annual Pentagon report China increased number of ground troops in straits area by 25,000.

- ["Taiwan leader surrenders powers"](#), BBC, 1 June 2006.
- ["Taiwan sets self-defense objectives"](#), *Washington Post*, 21 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°42, [China and Taiwan: Uneasy Détente](#), 21 Sept. 2005.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

↳ Indonesia State of emergency declared in Yogyakarta after 5.9 magnitude earthquake 27 May killed 6,000 and displaced 650,000. Draft law on Aceh governance still being debated in parliament with human rights provision, extent of Islamic law application and other issues unresolved. Thousands protested delays, calling for quick approval to allow provincial elections - now not likely before 15 September. EU-led Aceh Monitoring Mission's mandate extended until mid-September to oversee polls. Dissension within GAM reportedly growing over election participation. Relations with Australia thawed after Papua asylum issue tension; FMs Wirayuda and Downer met 15 May and announced Indonesia's ambassador, recalled in March, would return to Canberra. Tensions remained in Papua: trials of suspects in Abepura riots began 17 May. In Central Sulawesi, police arrested several men led by JI member on suspicion of October 2005 beheading of 3 Christian schoolgirls; later aired taped confession. Further trials in connection with 2005 Bali bombs began 9 May.

- ["Noordin's support structure needs dismantling"](#), *Paras Indonesia*, 24 May 2006.
- ["Anti-pornography rally in Jakarta"](#), BBC, 21 May 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Report N°114,  [Terrorism in Indonesia: Noordin's Networks](#), 5 May 2006. Police are closing in on Noordin Top, South East Asia's most wanted terrorist, but the problem of his support structure must still be tackled. Noordin's personal networks based around an inner circle of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members, are gradually expanding to build a following committed to al-Qaeda style attacks - even though many in JI disapprove. Noordin has shown remarkable determination and capacity to plan operations as he loses his closest colleagues to police dragnets. The network of JI schools, administrative structures, family and business contacts remains. For four years, Noordin has worked the jihadist networks to build a following of diehard loyalists, and those same networks may be available to others even if he is arrested.

➤ Myanmar/Burma Military junta continued campaign in Karen state "to clear up terrorist resistance"; over 10,000 ethnic Karens reported displaced. Unexpected visit by UN envoy Gambari and rare meeting with detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi raised hopes for her release; UN suggested forthcoming aid and UNSG Annan made direct appeal, but junta ordered 1-year extension of Suu Kyi's house arrest.

- ["US seeks UN action on Myanmar over Suu Kyi arrest"](#), AlertNet, 31 May 2006.
- ["Burmese delusions"](#), *Washington Post*, 29 May 2006.

➤ Philippines Despite initial optimism, informal MILF-Manila talks stalled over territorial delimitation and jurisdiction of ancestral homeland on Mindanao. MILF also stated serious opposition to renewed government interest in foreign mining investment. Muslim envoys visiting Mindanao to revive lapsed 1996 peace deal between Manila and MNLF called for better implementation by Manila of autonomy provisions, release of leader and MILF-MNLF cooperation. Communist rebels threatened more attacks on mining facilities in northern Luzon.

- ["Manila sees delays in striking a deal with rebels"](#), AlertNet, 27 May 2006.
- ["OIC working on MNLF, MILF unity, says envoy"](#), *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 22 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°110, [Philippines Terrorism: The Role of Militant Islamic Converts](#), 19 Dec. 2005.

➤ Thailand Political uncertainty in Bangkok and violence in south continued. Constitutional Court annulled 2 April election and called for new ballot. Election date set for 15 October, allowing MPs 90 days to change parties before contesting seats. No defections expected from ruling TRT party. Caretaker PM Thaksin returned to office 23 May after 6-week break; still head of TRT but might not contest election. People's Alliance for Democracy, anti-Thaksin group, to transform into political party. New Muslim party established by southern academics welcomed by locals as possible channel to address southern conflict but unlikely to make impact at national level. Several hostage-taking incidents in Narathiwat, including 2 female teachers 19 May; national outcry led to temporary closure of more than 200 schools in "red zone".

- ["Return of the thick-skinned one"](#), *The Nation*, 25 May 2006.
- ["Thailand closes 100 schools after teacher hostage crisis"](#), AFP, 22 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°105, [Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution](#), 18 Nov. 2005; and N°98, [Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad](#), 18 May 2005.

➤ Timor-Leste Security collapsed as 600 renegade soldiers, dismissed in April after strike over perceived discrimination against western recruits and led by Maj. Alfredo Reinado, clashed with security forces. 30 killed since late April, including 10 disarmed police under UN protection, leading to deployment of over 2,000 mostly Australian troops 25-29 May at request of government. Arson attacks and looting throughout capital as urban gang members contributed to chaos, along with protests calling for resignation of PM Alkatiri. President Gusmao imposed emergency powers of full presidential control 30 May; defence and interior ministers resigned 1 June.

- ["From bad to worse in East Timor"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 31 May 2006.
- ["In East Timor, refugees born of chaos, carnage and fear"](#), *New York Times*, 29 May 2006.

Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°50,  [Managing Tensions on the Timor-Leste/Indonesia Border](#), 4 May 2006. Closer border cooperation between Indonesia and Timor-Leste is needed to help reduce a legacy of tension. Timor-Leste has other significant security problems - particularly in Dili - and fears of significant violence along the border with Indonesian West Timor are largely unfounded. Smuggling and illegal crossings, rather than militia incursions, have emerged as the main border security issues. A soft-border regime is needed to establish an infrastructure for legal cross-border trade and improving security cooperation. Other recommended measures include investing in road works and deploying more police. The two countries should also work with donors to address serious justice issues related to the 1999 violence and devise a lasting solution for ex-refugees and on livelihood- and income-generation projects.

PACIFIC

➤ Fiji Power-sharing agreement reached after Laisenia Qarase, PM and leader of mainly ethnic Fijian SDL party, won narrow victory over Labour party, mainly representing ethnic Indian population. Labour, after internal disagreements, agreed to 9 portfolios offered by Qarase but party leader Chaudhry opted to stay out of government.

- ["Elections accentuate racial divide"](#), *Asian Tribune*, 28 May 2006.
- ["Labour MPs vote to join Fiji government"](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May 2006.

➤ Solomon Islands Situation improved after opposition leader Sogavare won secret parliamentary ballot 4 May, following April mass riots which forced resignation of Snyder Rini. Australia to scale down troop presence from 400 to 140.

- ["Australian forces will stay in Solomon Islands: Downer"](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 2006.
- ["New PM elected in Solomon Islands"](#), BBC, 4 May 2006.

Europe

BALKANS

➤ Albania Parliament set up committee to investigate Chief Prosecutor Sollaku on allegations of organised crime ties.

- [“Cheney: Balkan countries would rejuvenate NATO”](#), RFE/RL, 7 May 2006.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°153, [Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?](#), 25 Feb. 2004.

➤ Bosnia & Herzegovina Republika Srpska PM Dodik urged Bosnian Serbs be given right to self-determination referendum following 21 May Montenegrin independence vote; NGOs collected over 50,000 signatures in support. High Rep. Schwarz-Schilling sharply denounced Dodik and ruled out referendum. Second round of Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) technical negotiations with EU held 12 May, but EU warned implementation of failed constitutional amendments and police reform main conditions of progress towards SAA. Leaders of 6 main parties issued statement reiterating commitment to constitutional changes, despite April failure to pass reforms. General elections set for 1 October.

- [“EU spurns calls from Bosnian Serbs for referendum”](#), *Financial Times*, 30 May 2006.
- [“Montenegro vote spurs Bosnia Serb referendum calls”](#), Reuters, 29 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°164, [Bosnia’s Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU](#), 6 Sept. 2005.

➤ Kosovo Fourth round of direct talks between Belgrade and Pristina in Vienna ended without agreement on decentralisation 5 May. Fifth round, on protection of cultural and religious heritage, produced agreement although some differences remained 23 May. 31 May talks on assigning property and debt produced sharp disagreement. Contact Group met in Paris 26 May; discounted request from Serbia for talks to focus immediately on defining Kosovo’s status. Serbia presented reformulated status proposal: 20-year agreement with UN for autonomy. Shooting near Mitrovica wounded 2 Serbs 11 May. UN police fired teargas on Krusha e Vogel/Mala Krusa villagers who stoned UN convoy escorting defence lawyers of Hague tribunal indictee Dragoljub Ojdanic 25 May; charges against Ojdanic include killing of more than 100 men from village in 1999. PM Ceku held talks with Macedonian PM Buckovski to diffuse tension over border demarcation dispute; agreed only “technical” issue. NATO announced completion of KFOR command structure “streamlining” to enhance force’s capacity to respond to ethnic violence.

- [“Agreement on Kosovo decentralisation still elusive”](#), Southeast European Times, 19 May 2006.
- [“NATO streamlines command structure in Kosovo”](#), Reuters, 10 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°170, [Kosovo: The Challenge of Transition](#), 17 Feb. 2006.

➤ Macedonia President Cervenkovski and major party leaders signed Declaration on Fair and Democratic Elections ahead of 5 July polls. Parliament approved defence reforms creating professional army, condition of NATO membership. Pristina-Skopje tension over border demarcation eased after sides agreed “technical” not political issue.

- [“Macedonia-Kosovo border talks confusion”](#), IWPR, 10 May 2006.
- [“EC to launch negotiations with Macedonia on visa regime”](#), Southeast European Times, 5 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°41, [Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe](#), 12 Jan. 2006.

➤ Montenegro 21 May referendum resulted in victory for independence movement with 55.53% of vote - exceeding EU-imposed 55% - hurdle and 86% turnout. Some unionists, backed by Belgrade, refused to recognise outcome: Serbian President Tadic recognised result, but Serbian PM Kostunica remained silent. EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, welcomed referendum conduct and recognised outcome.

- [“EU gives Montenegro hope of deal”](#), BBC, 29 May 2006.
- [“Enter Montenegro”](#), *The Economist*, 25 May 2006.

Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°42, [Montenegro’s Referendum](#), 30 May 2006. Montenegro’s successful independence referendum should on balance increase stability in the western Balkans. After the pro-independence victory, Podgorica still faces transition challenges, but none should affect regional stability, and all can be resolved as the country moves forward with the Stabilisation and Association process toward EU membership. International actors should do everything possible to speed its accession to international institutions. Most neighbouring countries are openly pleased with the outcome, in their view marking the end of the Greater Serbian project. In Bosnia, however, there is loose talk about holding a similar referendum, but the international community must continue to make it absolutely clear that partition of Bosnia is not an option. Meanwhile, Belgrade is still in shock from the referendum loss and struggling to formulate rational policy.



➤ Serbia EU suspended Stabilisation and Association talks 3 May after government failed to meet deadline for handing over war crimes suspect Mladic to Hague tribunal; U.S. announced aid cut 31 May. Deputy PM Labus resigned over arrest failure; his party, junior coalition member G17 Plus, threatened to withdraw from government if no arrest by September. Government in disarray after Montenegrin independence vote: with questionable parliamentary majority must now reconstitute itself and appoint new ministers.

- [“Serbs greet independence vote with shrugs”](#), BIRN, 22 May 2006.
- [“EU halts Serbia entry talks over Mladic”](#), *The Guardian*, 3 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°39, [Serbia: Spinning its Wheels](#), 23 May 2005 and Briefing N°42 [Montenegro’s Referendum](#), 30 May 2006.

CAUCASUS

➤ Armenia Speaker of Parliament Baghdasarian resigned, pulling his Orinats Yerkir Party out of ruling coalition. Baghdasarian’s earlier remarks in favour of NATO accession and critical of Russia for impeding process, rebuked by President Kocharian, were seen as reason for rift.

- [“Outgoing parliament speaker now ‘in opposition’”](#), RFE/RL, 23 May 2006.
- [“Coalition breaks up, but government remains stable”](#), Eurasia Insight, 22 May 2006.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°158, [Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead](#), 18 Oct. 2004.

➤ Azerbaijan Repeat of November 2005 parliamentary elections held 13 May in 10 constituencies with 36.5% turnout. Ruling New Azerbaijan Party gained 5 seats, remaining 5 went to independents and “soft” opposition. OSCE/ODIHR observers noted some improvement but ongoing need for

electoral reform. Bahaddin Haziyeu, editor of opposition paper, severely beaten by unidentified assailants 19 May. Third round of ENP Action Plan talks with EU postponed.

- "OSCE condemns 'brutal' attack on Azeri journalist", RFE/RL, 20 May 2006.
- "International observers give Azerbaijan's repeat elections stamp of approval", Eurasianet, 16 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°40, *Azerbaijan's 2005 Elections: Lost Opportunity*, 21 Nov. 2005.

➡ Chechnya (Russia) Russian President Putin intervened to defuse mounting power struggle between Chechen President Alkhanov and PM Kadyrov by holding 5 May Moscow meeting. Kadyrov's involvement in rights violations under scrutiny after Council of Europe anti-torture watchdog prevented from visiting Kadyrov's home village, suspected site of prisoner abuse, and rights group alleged secret prison network used to detain and torture civilians. 9 soldiers reported killed in insurgent ambushes 17, 23 May.

- "Alleged secret prisons in Chechnya", ISN, 22 May 2006.
- "Chechen power struggle hots up", IWPR, 11 May 2006.

➡ North Caucasus (non-Chechnya) Insecurity continued throughout region. In Ingushetia, Deputy Interior Minister Dzhabrail Kostoyev among 7 killed in car-bomb attack 17 May; 3 rebels and policeman killed in clash near Chechen border. In Karachayevo-Cherkessiya, prison governor shot by unknown gunmen. In Dagestan, clash between security services and rebels, who authorities say were planning to seize a school, killed 3; at least 14 police, 3 suspected militants and civilian reported dead in other incidents in republic.

- "Violence flares in Russia's Caucasus", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 May 2006.
- "South Russia blast kills minister", BBC, 17 May 2006.

➡ Georgia Following April import ban on Georgian wine and brandy, Russia banned mineral water, one of Georgia's biggest exports. First convoy of Russian military equipment moved from Akhalkalaki base to Armenia 18 May. Georgian-Abkhaz Coordinating Council met in Tbilisi 15 May, first time since 2001; sides exchanged peace initiatives. UNSG's Group of Friends for Georgia visited Tbilisi and Sukhumi 22-23 May. International Consortium of Black Sea Railways set up to address restoration of Abkhaz section of Russian-Georgian railway. Joint Control Commission meeting on South Ossetia held 11-12 May; sides agreed to 14 June donor conference. Georgia criticised arrival of 500 Russian troops in South Ossetia without visas as illegal; Russia said standard rotation.

- "Georgia commission reviews possible secession", ISN, 22 May 2006.
- "Abkhazia resolution group holds first meeting since 2001", RFE/RL, 15 May 2006.
- For most recent report, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°173, *Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role*, 20 Mar. 2006.

➡ Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) Azeri and Armenian FMs met with OSCE Minsk Group in Strasbourg 18 May, but failed to agree on proposed 4-6 June date for 2 presidents to meet in Bucharest. Minsk Group chairmen held talks with President Kocharian in Yerevan 25 May.

- "Armenia shows support for Karabakh", IWPR, 11 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°167, *Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan for Peace*, 11 Oct. 2005.

EASTERN EUROPE

➡ Belarus EU froze assets of President Lukashenko and 35 officials, supplementing April travel ban, while U.S. also imposed travel ban. Friction between government and opposition continued. May Day demonstrators protested against April imprisonment of opposition leader Milinkevich who was released after 15-day sentence. Authorities temporarily detained opposition leader Lyabedzka prior to another rally 10 May. Businessman Levaneuski released after 2-year jail term for alleging government corruption.

- "EU to freeze president's assets", RFE/RL, 18 May 2005.
- "Opposition seeks direction after presidential election", RFE/RL, 3 May 2006.

➡ Moldova Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov said would hold independence referendum by September, citing Montenegrin example; Russia supported move. OSCE Chairman De Gucht visited Chisinau and Tiraspol 31 May, urging return to talks. U.S. reportedly issued first explicit signal will not ratify 1999 Agreement adapting 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty until Russia withdraws 1,500-strong force from Transnistria.

- "Talks on Moldova separatism must resume - mediator", AlertNet, 31 May 2006.
- "Separatist Moldovan region deals new blow to talks", AlertNet, 24 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°157, *Moldova: Regional Tensions over Transnistria*, 17 June 2004.

➡ Ukraine New parliament convened 25 May but voted to postpone first session to 7 June following proposal by Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc, Our Ukraine, and Socialist Party to allow them time to form coalition; efforts so far hampered by disagreement over PM post.

- "New parliament convenes, sets deadline for coalition", RFE/RL, 25 May 2006.
- "Our Ukraine suspends talks with Tymoshenko", RFE/RL, 16 May 2006.

WESTERN EUROPE/MEDITERRANEAN

➡ ✎ Basque Country (Spain) Spanish PM Zapatero said on visit to region he would announce start of direct talks between government and ETA in June.

- "Spain's PM seeks dialogue with ETA", ISN, 22 May 2006.
- "Spain 'ready to begin ETA talks'", BBC, 21 May 2006.

➡ Cyprus Parliamentary elections held 21 May. Poll, in which President Papadopoulos' Diko Party improved standing with 18% vote and its coalition partner AKEL Party gained most votes with 31%, seen as endorsing ruling coalition and its anti-Annan Plan position. Pro-reunification opposition Disy Party followed AKEL with 30%.

- "Greek Cypriots back centrist party", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 May 2006.
- "Cyprus ruling coalition wins poll", BBC, 21 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°171, *The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?*, 8 Mar. 2006.

➡ Northern Ireland (UK) Stormont Assembly reconvened 15 May for first time since October 2002 suspension, but has no legislative power until it elects multi-party government; must

do so within 6 weeks or face temporary suspension. Sinn Fein head Gerry Adams nominated DUP leader Ian Paisley as First Minister; Paisley refused. PUP leader David Ervine joined Ulster Unionist Party Group, now second largest in assembly; latter criticised for ignoring PUP link to militant Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Mark Haddock, leading UVF member, critically injured after shot by unknown assailants 30 May. Catholic boy killed in sectarian attack in Ballymena 8 May.

- [“Paisley nomination ‘smart tactics’”](#), BBC, 22 May 2006.
- [“NI politicians return to Stormont”](#), BBC, 15 May 2006.

📍 Turkey Political turmoil followed gunman’s attack on High Court that killed judge 17 May. Suspected assailant and accomplices quickly arrested. Opposition alleged government provoked attack with its criticism of February court ruling against teacher who wore headscarf en route to school, but ongoing investigation into suspects suggest ultra-nationalist rather than radical-Islamist links. Tensions escalated as judiciary and military led 20,000-strong pro-secularist anti-government demonstration in Ankara, and ministers assaulted at judge’s funeral. Landmark trial of 2 military police officers accused over November 2005 Semdinli incidents began. At least 12 killed in military-PKK clashes in southeast. 18 May French parliamentary vote to criminalise denial of Armenian genocide delayed to October; followed recall of ambassadors from France and Canada over issue. Greek and Turkish FMs sought to defuse tensions after 2 jets collided during mock “dog-fight” in disputed Aegean airspace, killing Greek pilot.

- [“A Byzantine plot in Turkey”](#), Eurasia Insight, 24 May 2006.
- [“Rehn urges Turkey to step up reforms”](#), Southeast European Times, 18 May 2006.

Latin America / Caribbean

📍 Bolivia President Morales continued nationalisation of energy sector: announced takeover of natural gas sector 1 May, giving foreign-owned companies 6 months to negotiate new contracts or leave; ordered foreign financial firms to cede control over pension fund effectively granting government oversight in 3 large companies. Morales and Venezuelan President Chavez signed 200 far-reaching economic and cultural accords.

- [“Bolivia leader claims assassination attempt”](#), *Washington Post*, 30 May 2006.
- [“Some are worrying Bolivia has sold soul to Venezuela”](#), *Miami Herald*, 27 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Latin America Report N°15, [Bolivia at the Crossroads: The December Elections](#), 8 Dec. 2005.

📍 Brazil Orchestrated, week-long clashes between notorious Sao Paulo gang First Capital Command and police claimed 170. Violence against police ordered by jailed leaders after 8 transferred away from Sao Paulo. Deaths included 40 police; officials denied police heavy-handed but gave no explanation for deaths of up to 107 “suspects”.

- [“Calm returns to shocked Sao Paulo”](#), BBC, 20 May 2006.
- [“Scattered violence continues in Brazil as police strike back at gangs”](#), CP, 17 May 2006.

📍 Colombia Incumbent President Uribe won 28 May presidential election with 62% of vote, reinforcing his strong stance against rebels and move toward stability; leftwing

Carlos Gaviria came second with 22%. Polls relatively peaceful though FARC stepped up attacks prior to vote: bombed power installations and organised grenade attacks in main port city of Buenaventura, blew up part of second most important pipeline, and attacked army patrol in Cauca in south. Constitutional court altered key provisions of controversial Justice and Peace Law, basis for peace process with AUC paramilitaries, after declaring original terms unconstitutional. AUC warned decision major blow to talks but later agreed to continue peace process.

- [“Colombian president wins 2nd term”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 29 May 2006.
- [“Ruling may jeopardize Colombia peace deal”](#), CNN, 19 May 2006.
- Crisis Group Latin America Report N°16, [Colombia: Towards Peace and Justice?](#), 14 March 2006.


📍 Ecuador U.S. free-trade negotiations on hold after government seized assets of U.S. oil firm. Presidential candidates argued legal justification for seizure while government sought to smooth ties with Washington. President Palacio broadened energy ties with Venezuela during visit from President Chavez 30 May.

- [“Ecuador ‘was right to revoke Occidental licence’”](#), *Financial Times*, 21 May 2006.
- [“Ecuador seeks to soothe U.S. ties amid asset feud”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 18 May 2006.

📍 Haiti In positive move toward peace, René Préval inaugurated as president 14 May and parliament sworn in 9 May. Préval nominated close political ally Jacques Edouard Alexis as PM; senate and chamber of deputies approved appointment. Security continued to improve, but tensions remained, particularly in Cité Soleil slum.

- [“Former premier back in familiar role in Haiti”](#), *Miami Herald*, 23 May 2006.
- [“A cloudy dawn in Haiti”](#), *Time*, 15 May 2006.

Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°10, [Haiti after the Elections: Challenges for Préval’s First 100 Days](#), 11 May 2006. If René Préval, who is to be inaugurated as president on 14 May, acts decisively in his first 100 days and receives international backing, he can capitalise on an improved security situation to address some of the underlying causes of violence and crime. His government needs to disarm and demobilise gangs and strengthen the Haitian National Police by professionalizing it and purging it of corrupt officers and politically-linked cells. The judicial system must also be overhauled, beginning with establishment of a joint international/national panel to review the cases of prisoners detained for long periods without trial. Haitians have high expectations of the newly elected government and Préval needs to take advantage of this rare optimism or the country could become the hemisphere’s first permanently failed state.



📍 Peru Presidential runoff to be held 4 June between nationalist candidate Humala and former President Garcia, top 2 after first round 9 April. Campaigning by candidates continued amidst allegations of foul play on both sides; 5 killed in clashes between supporters. Relations with Venezuela remained tense. Chile’s Supreme Court released former Peruvian President Fujimori on bail pending extradition decision.

- [“A false dichotomy”](#), *The Guardian* (Comment is Free), 30 May 2006.
- [“Peru accuses Chavez of meddling”](#), BBC, 30 May 2006.

- ◀ Venezuela Parliament issued report recommending state assume majority control of key oil projects, as President Chavez doubled taxes on oil firms to support social programs abroad. Chavez solidified leftist block by signing economic and cultural accords with Bolivia and Ecuador. Tensions with U.S. continued with U.S. ban on arms sales.
 - [“Chavez and Morales in trade deals”](#), BBC, 26 May 2006.
 - [“Neighbors grow impatient with Chávez”](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 19 May 2006.



Middle East / North Africa

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

- ◀ ▶ Israel/Occupied Territories Mounting violence in Gaza fuelled by power struggle between Fatah and Hamas loyalists raised fears of civil war. Rivalries focused on respective control of Palestinian President Abbas and Islamist Palestinian Authority (PA) government over security forces. Abbas sent police to Gaza in response to Hamas deployment of 3,000-strong force provoking clashes from 17 May; 10 killed before “national dialogue” to resolve differences commenced 25 May. Abbas gave Hamas 10 days to agree to borders’ framework negotiated among Palestinian imprisoned leaders or call referendum. Israeli air strikes on Gaza killed 15 militants, senior Islamic Jihad leader and several civilians. Israel’s parliament voted 65-49 in favour of PM Olmert’s government 4 May. Olmert received implicit U.S. backing for “bold ideas” for West Bank: removal of remote settlements, keeping larger enclaves and imposing border if political negotiations not resumed by end 2006. U.S. House of Representatives backed legislation to brand PA “terrorist sanctuary” severing all contacts with PA and further restricting assistance. Quartet (U.S., Russia, EU, UN) agreed in principle to endorse “temporary mechanism” to channel aid to Palestinian people while bypassing government. Air strikes and clashes with Lebanon-based militants followed rocket attack 28 May.
 - [“Israel seeks US seal on West Bank plan”](#), *The Guardian*, 23 May 2006.
 - [“Rival factions set Palestinians on brink of war”](#), AlertNet, 22 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°49, [Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration](#), 18 Jan. 2006.

- ◀ Lebanon Worst cross-border fighting in 6 years erupted 28 May after rockets fired into Israel in apparent response to killing of Islamic Jihad group leader in south. Israeli air strikes targeted Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine camps, leading to exchange of artillery fire, and border skirmishes with Hizbollah: 3 guerrillas reportedly killed before truce brokered by UN. Political leaders held seventh round of “national dialogue” talks 16 May but failed to find consensus on future of pro-Syrian President Lahoud or disarmament of Hizbollah: talks to continue 8 June. Rival leaders’ March pledge to peacefully disarm guerrillas outside camps within 6 months yet to be implemented. Lebanese soldier killed in skirmish with pro-Syrian Palestinian guerrillas 17 May. UN Security Council called for disbandment of all militias inside Lebanon.
 - [“Lebanon seeks way to disarm Palestinian militia groups”](#), *New York Times*, 1 June 2006.

- [“UN faults Lebanon for rocket attack that set off border clash”](#), *Daily Star*, 30 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°48, [Lebanon: Managing the Gathering Storm](#), 5 Dec. 2005.

- ◀ Syria UN Security Council called on Syria to delineate common border, establish full diplomatic relations with and reduce arms flow into Lebanon. EU issued statement against harassment of human rights defenders after 9 reportedly detained for calling for better relations with Lebanon. U.S. extended sanctions citing support for terrorism, interference in Lebanon, pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, and undermining Iraq reconstruction.
 - [“Syria’s silent purge”](#), *The Guardian*, 31 May 2006.
 - [“Security Council calls on Syria to take steps against arms movements into Lebanon”](#), UN News Centre, 17 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°39, [Syria After Lebanon, Lebanon After Syria](#), 12 Apr. 2005.

GULF

- ◀ Iran FM Mottaki said Iran ready for talks with EU3 (UK, France, Germany) “without preconditions” 30 May. U.S. offered to join direct multilateral talks on condition Iran suspends uranium enrichment 31 May. Iran responded positively to discussing “mutual concerns” but said not ready to give up enrichment. Previously UN Security Council permanent members failed to agree on proposed U.S., UK and France resolution, to threaten sanctions. In response, EU3 devised new deal offering nuclear power through access to imported enriched uranium and light-water reactors that do not produce plutonium waste: includes security guarantees and economic and technological aid, but threatens sanctions if not accepted. FMs of UNSC permanent members and Germany due to meet 1 June to finalise incentive plan; if approved, to be presented to Iran before 21-June EU-U.S. summit. U.S. working toward UNSC resolution, said would agree to language ruling out threat of immediate military force. In letter to U.S. President Bush, Ahmadinejad criticised U.S. foreign policy and Israel. Although first such communication since 1979, dismissed by U.S. as irrelevant.
 - [“Iran ready to talk but won’t halt nuclear programme”](#), *Financial Times*, 1 June 2006.
 - Testimony of Karim Sadjadpour (Crisis Group) to U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, [“Iran’s political/nuclear ambitions and U.S. policy options”](#), 18 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°51, [Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?](#), 23 Feb. 2006.

- ◀ Iraq After 5 months’ negotiations, parliament approved 37-member “unity government” 20 May. 3 main posts of security, defence and interior only with caretaker occupants - including PM Maliki as interior minister - but new government commended for inclusion of Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds. 30 May talks aimed at finding defence and interior ministers ended with no agreement. Security continued to deteriorate with daily car bombs, suicide blasts and discoveries of executed bodies. Violence-related deaths reportedly over 1,100/month in Baghdad with many bodies showing evidence of torture, indicating sectarian revenge killings. 9 UK troops killed amid widespread unrest in south leading Maliki to order month-long state of emergency 31 May.

- ["Iraqi leader visits Basra"](#), *International Herald Tribune*, 1 June 2006.
- ["Could it prevail?"](#), *The Economist*, 25 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East Report N°52, [The Next Iraqi War? Sectarianism and Civil Conflict](#), 27 Feb. 2006.

- Yemen Army rearrested al-Qaeda militant Abdullah Ahmad al-Raymi who escaped from prison in February.
 - ["When cultural norms underpin gun ownership"](#), IRIN, 21 May 2006.

NORTH AFRICA

- Algeria Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) threatened to attack U.S. military bases in North and sub-Saharan Africa. 18 children and 3 women found dead in Jijel cave: police killed 5 suspected GSPC militants during raid. In separate police operation 10 GSPC rebels killed. President Bouteflika appointed close ally Abdelaziz Belkhadem new PM.
 - ["Algeria replaces premier"](#), Al-Jazeera, 24 May 2006.
 - ["Algerian group threatens US facilities in Africa"](#), Reuters, 12 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°29, [Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page](#), 30 July 2004.
- Egypt Internal situation remained tense as police beat and detained hundreds of protestors supporting 2 senior judges facing disciplinary action after alleging 2005 election fraud; EU and U.S. condemned police conduct. Hearing cleared Judge

Mekki but reprimanded and blocked promotion of Judge Bastawisi. 300 judges staged further protest for judicial independence 25 May. Leader and second-in-command of al-Tawhid wa 'l-Jihad group, accused of April Dahab bombings, killed during arrest attempts. Court upheld December 2005 5-year conviction of former presidential candidate Ayman Nour on forgery charges, which supporters say are politically motivated. Muslim Brotherhood said 23 members arrested while protesting against extension of 1981 state of emergency.

- ["Egyptian court rulings hit reform hopes"](#), *Financial Times*, 18 May 2006.
- Comment by Mahmud Mekki and Hisham Bastawisi ["When judges are beaten"](#), *The Guardian*, 10 May 2006.
- For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°46, [Reforming Egypt: In Search of a Strategy](#), 4 Oct. 2005.

- Mauritania EU announced would resume aid in June, withheld since 2005 coup.
 - ["EU to resume Mauritania aid frozen after coup"](#), AlertNet, 19 May 2006.
 - For background, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°53, [Political Transition in Mauritania: Assessment and Horizons](#), 24 Apr. 2006.
- Western Sahara UN High Commission for Human Rights delegation made first exploratory visit to region. Think tank suggested UN Security Council may refuse to extend mandate of peacekeeping MINURSO in October.
 - ["UN Security Council might change tack, think-tank"](#), IRIN, 18 May 2006.
 - ["Update report No.4"](#), Security Council Report, 17 May 2006.

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José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, 9 June 2005

Advocacy Offices

- Brussels** brussels@crisisgroup.org
+32 2 502 9038
- Washington** washington@crisisgroup.org
+1 202 785 1601
- New York** newyork@crisisgroup.org
+1 212 813 0820
- London** london@crisisgroup.org
+44 20 7031 0230
- Moscow** moscow@crisisgroup.org
+7 095 251 4485

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