

COMMENTARY BY MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERT GROUP (NOVEMBER 2007)



*Marian **Abisheva**, Deputy Director of the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, **Astana, Kazakhstan**:*

During the entire time that the Index was calculated, including the past several months, I mostly agreed with its dynamics, but this time I was rather surprised by the results. I do not have the impression that the situation in the world has become more secure. Perhaps, this is due to my understanding of security as a notion closely linked to stability of social, economic, political and other processes, which have not become any simpler or clearer in November

The world financial markets have been growing increasingly unstable, and there are talks about a possible economic crisis. November saw many natural disasters in all parts of the world, leading to many deaths and tremendous economic and social loss. That is why I expected the indicator to be lower. Ongoing political conflicts did not show any improvement either. Report of the US National Intelligence Council brings down tensions over Iranian nuclear issue, yet in the American perception, Iran remains a threat.

Confrontation in Georgia and permanent instability in Ukraine can be extrapolated on the political situation in other countries. Our countries are all going through election campaigns: Kazakhstan held parliamentary elections in the summer, Russia did the same several days ago. Presidential elections in Uzbekistan are coming up. Preserving stability in these cases is an important security factor.

In December I expect political activity to slow down. I do not think that the Index will change much.

***Zhiye Ji**, Director of the Institute of Russian Studies **Beijing, China**:*



I agree with the growth of the Index value. Indeed, the situation has improved. The talks on the North Korean nuclear issue go on, and presentation of report on Iran's issue by the US intelligence can also reduce a threat of a new conflict. Peacekeeping forces are going to Sudan, and this will contribute to improving security situation in Eastern Africa. The new government of Japan conducts softer foreign policy and this also positively influences political climate in our region.

Among other events that had a positive impact on security situation I would note peaceful settlement of Pervez Musharraf presidency issue and scheduling the parliamentary elections in Pakistan.

The ongoing confrontation in Myanmar and the short-run coup d'etat attempt in Philippines negatively affected political situation in the South-East Asia. Today it is rather difficult to find the fine line between domestic tensions and their transformation into international instability.

In December the most serious issue would be the possible proclamation of independence in Kosovo. The situation will affect many states facing separatist movements, and this in turn will influence the state of international security.



Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, Dubai, United Arab Emirates:

I think the Index does not adequately reflect the security situation as the increase in the index in November is basically a reaction to short-term indicators such as the drop in the level of violence in Iraq and the Middle East peace conference held in Annapolis, Maryland. Those indicators have not changed the overall security context, which continues to be highly volatile. There have been no significant policy changes undertaken by major actors suggesting a more favorable security climate. Overall, I do not think that global security had improved by the Index value of more than 50 points this year.

The indicators of Index for the period of July to October are more accurate as they indicate a largely static environment in which there has not been much upward or downward movement. The overall trend of an improving global security situation is in my view not justified.

The continued concerns over the Iranian nuclear program and statements from the Iranian leadership regarding missile developments and retaliatory capabilities have influenced regional security most negatively.

On the surface, the drop in the level of violence inside Iraq could be considered as a positive factor although I would argue that this should not be seen as a long-term indicator leading to a better regional security climate.

In December I would expect the index to show a further upward trend based on events such as the release of the National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program which for the moment has significantly reduced the ability of the United States to undertake military action.



Evgeny Satanovsky, President of the Institute of the Middle East, Moscow, Russia:

As I had mentioned before, the Index *iSi* is as relative as any other index and, even more, in contrast to temperature or atmosphere pressure, it is influenced by human factor, namely, the attitudes of experts who may well be mistaken. Nevertheless, I can agree with the dynamics of the Index: there was no bloodshed or any new serious conflict or war in November. Crises around presidential seats in Lebanon and Pakistan had negative influence on security situation in Asia and the Middle East. The decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, which approved the presidency of Pervez **Musharraf**, and the Middle East peace conference held by the US in Annapolis had a positive impact on the situation in the region.

In December the situation can stabilize due to New Year's and Christmas holidays, celebrated by the great powers. Yet, security situation could be aggravated by any shift in the region, which already balances on the brink of detonation. Sensitive issues are Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan and Somalia, as well as the policy of the Iranian president and the zones of Al Qaeda activity.



Alexander Saveliev, director, Department for Strategic Studies, Center for International Security (Institute for World Economy and International Relations Studies), Moscow, Russia:

I agree with the Index growth in November. No large upheavals have occurred and even some promising moments have emerged. There were also no major international events, and I think it means that the situation normalizes.

The first problematic issue is the situation around Iran and its nuclear program. New report by IAEA Director General Mohamed **ElBaradei** as well as presentation of the National Intelligence Estimate, clearly had a positive influence on the Index. Progress of resolving the second issue - North Korea's nuclear program - also contributed to the growth of the Index.

I think the elections to the Russian State Duma did not have any substantial impact on the state of international security.

Among the negative factors, I would note the actual refusal of the US to support the Russian proposal on cooperation in ABM defense. It is rather doubtful that the agreements achieved at the Middle East peace conference in Annapolis would be implemented. The situation at the Turkish-Iraqi border, as well as in other conflict zones, remains tense. Thus, overall we can speak about the state of *alarming stability* in the world.

I expect further growth of the Index in December. The Kosovo issue can aggravate the security situation, but I think many experts are prepared for such development. The consequences of a possible declaration of independence by Kosovo would be apparent later, but not in December. The U.S. have calmed down on the issue of deployment of the ABM defense elements in Europe. It is impossible to predict events in the Middle East or fully exclude the possibility of new terrorist acts. On a global scale, I do not see any urgent issues in December that could damage international security and decrease the ISI indicator.