

Erdoğan approves ‘benchmark law,’ EU sources say visa liberalization to be delayed

Hurriyet Daily News, 20.05.2016



Turkish President Erdoğan has approved a law on forming a panel to monitor the discipline of law enforcement officials, one of the last hurdles remaining before the country wins visa-free access to Europe for its nationals, but EU officials said Turkey was set to miss a June deadline in the deal because of a dispute over a Turkish anti-terrorism law.

Erdoğan approved a law on an agreement between Ankara and Brussels on the readmission of people residing in the EU without authorization, as well as other required laws. All five laws and agreements approved by Erdoğan were published in the Official Gazette.

In Brussels, however, EU officials and diplomats said the exemption of Turkish nationals from visa requirement across the EU’s Schengen zone by June, the main reward for Ankara’s collaboration in cutting off the influx of migrants into Europe, may now come in July at the earliest but more likely not until the fall, Reuters reported.

The 28-nation bloc is dependent on Ankara to enforce a deal, criticized by rights groups, that has sharply cut the number of refugees and migrants reaching Greece, giving EU leaders breathing space after more than a million arrived last year. Ankara has yet to meet five of the 72 requirements for visa liberalization, according to the executive European Commission, which proposed earlier this month the relaxation of travel rules for Turks if Turkey fulfilled the benchmarks by the end of June.

But the European Parliament, which must approve the visa decision, has refused to start work on the proposal until Ankara meets the criteria in full. Parliament President Martin Schulz said he did not see that happening before the end of June. “De facto a decision in June is not possible anymore,” an EU source familiar with the negotiations told Reuters.

Lawmakers could still theoretically vote on the plan at their final plenary session on July 4-7, but will more likely do so after the summer break. The main priority for Erdoğan, who has refused to amend anti-terror laws to meet the EU criteria, is to change the constitution to secure extensive presidential rule, and he has said October would also be acceptable for visa liberalization.

“An October scenario is possible, but also July. Let’s see how the Turks comply,” another EU source told Reuters. The EU says Turkey must narrow its definition of terrorist crimes, which leads to extensive application of the law against intellectuals and critics of Erdoğan, including dozens of journalists and academics.



Turkey has repeatedly declined to do so, saying the law is crucial in its fight with jihadists from the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) and militants of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The EU is now waiting to see what a new government will do on the outstanding criteria after a meeting of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) on May 22 picks a new prime minister, diplomats said. "We've been through this before," another EU official with long experience of negotiating with Ankara told Reuters. "It's not the first time there has been quite provocative talk from the Turkish side, then we sat down and found a way forward."

Sources in Brussels have been stressing that the commission's report said Turkey should "better align" – rather than "fully align" – its counter-terrorism regulation with EU norms, including to bring in more proportionality in punishment for any violations. That offers room for compromise.

Keeping the migration accord on track is a key priority for several EU member states, especially the bloc's biggest power, Germany, which took in most of the 1.3 million refugees and migrants who reached Europe last year.

The EU also promised revitalized EU accession talks and an initial 3 billion euros in aid for Syrian refugees in Turkey in return for Ankara's help on migration, and it has taken steps recently to speed up disbursement. Turkey is only due to start issuing the advanced biometric passports required for visa-free travel in October.

As an interim solution, as of June 2016, Turkey will issue short-term biometric passports including both a facial image and fingerprints of passport holders who wish to make use of visa-free travel to the EU. Given the European Parliament's tough stance on human rights and public anxiety in several EU states about granting visa-free entry to a largely Muslim population of 79 million, the room for compromise is limited. "We've got to get something that is more than a symbolic gesture from them on terrorism. The market will demand it," the first EU source said.

Most Turks consider EU migrant deal negative

Hurriyet Daily News, 20.05.2016



Over 50 percent of Turkish people regard the EU-Turkey migrant deal negatively, while some 21.7 percent said they thought the deal was a positive thing, according to a recent survey by Kadir Has University's Turkey Research Center.

The survey named "Turkish Foreign Policy Public Opinion Research" has concluded that 57 percent of respondents believe that Turkey's recent deal with the European Union for the readmission of Syrian refugees was not a good one. While 21.3 percent of respondents said they did not have an opinion about the deal, 21.7 percent of respondents said they supported it.

Under the controversial pact between the EU and Turkey to stop refugees crossing by boat to Greece, Turkey agreed to take back migrants who arrived in Greece after March 20. In return, Europe pledged that for every Syrian deported, it would accept one refugee from Turkey's vast camps, a move it hopes will discourage people from taking the highly risky journey across the Aegean Sea.

Among those who do not approve the agreement, the majority has said they were worried about the increasing number of Syrians that are going to enter Turkey, as others have said they were concerned about the economic hardships that might be caused with their existence in the country and that the EU would not abide by the article.

In the survey, which was conducted with some 1,000 people from 26 provinces, those who approved the deal largely said it was a good agreement because Turkey would be provided with financial benefits, while other smaller groups said it would restrict illegal migration and improve the living conditions of Syrians.

Regarding Turkish people's support for the EU membership process, some 61.8 percent said they backed Turkey's membership in the EU – a rise of almost 20 points since 2015. The study, however highlighted that a majority of people who believed that the country would never become an EU member had risen sharply from 47.6 to 66.7 percent in one year.

Another contentious issue that the survey touched upon was the Turkish public's opinion on the Turkey's action of downing a Russian jet on its border. The study revealed that over half of the Turkish people supported Turkey's downing of a Russian jet on Nov. 24 near the Syrian border.

Some 58.2 percent of respondents regard the act as a positive thing, while 41.8 percent said it was the wrong move, according to the "Turkish Foreign Policy Public Opinion Research" that was carried out by the university's Turkey Research Center.

Some 57.6 percent of those who supported the move said that “it showed that Turkey was a big country,” while those who said “we should protect our borders” followed the former argument. The majority of those who disapproved of the action said Turkey had behaved “disproportionately.” Some 27.3 percent said Turkey was not right in the action, while another 23.2 percent said Russia was a big country.

Two Turkish F-16’s shot down a Russian-made SU-24 jet on Nov. 24, 2015, near the Syrian border after it allegedly violated Turkish airspace. Turkey’s move precipitated a severe deterioration in relations with Russia as Moscow imposed several economic sanctions on its erstwhile economic partner in the areas of tourism and agriculture.

On Turkey’s relation with the United States, the survey results showed that compared to 2015, more people have started to regard the latter as a threat. While some 35.3 percent had such an opinion last year, this percentage rose to 44.1 in 2016.

Ankara speaks out on Greece’s Turkish minority

Anadolu Agency, 18.05.2016



The Turkish Foreign Ministry stated that the ethnic-Turkish population in northeastern Greece wanted the implementation of regulations and practices “that allow them to enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms.” Foreign Ministry spokesman Tanju Bilgiç said the current situation of the Turkish minority in the Western Thrace region stands “at a very distant point” from the optimistic outlook reflected in statements from the Greek authorities.

Greek daily Ekathimerini reported that Athens had criticized a conference held in a Turkish university earlier this month on “The Turkish identity of Muslims in Western Thrace.”

The newspaper wrote that Athens saw the meeting as “stoking tension and uncertainty” among Greek Muslims. “Greece follows a policy of equality that pertains to all Greek citizens, regardless of religious identity, and secures the prosperity and dignity and rights of all,” Greek Foreign Ministry spokesman Efstratios Efthymiou was quoted as saying in Ekathimerini’s report.

However, Bilgiç called on Greece to “respect the ethnic minority identity” and implement European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) verdicts against banning local NGOs from using the descriptor “Turkish” in their titles. He said that Greece has not yet implemented the court’s verdict, despite eight years having passed. Greece recognizes its minority population living in Western Thrace as a religious one – Muslim – rather than ethnic – Turkish, Bilgiç noted, calling on Greece to “meet the demands to open minority schools,” “recognize minority-elected muftis,” and re-grant citizenship to ethnic Turks.

Some members of the local minority were deprived of Greek citizenship because of Article 19 of Greece's 1955 Citizenship Law. The article stated that a "person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek citizenship."

This was abolished in 1998 but, despite this, the Greek government promised to grant citizenship to all those made stateless, a process which has yet to be concluded. Bilgiç said implementing regulations that provide fundamental rights and freedoms to the ethnic-Turkish minority would have a "positive effect in our bilateral relations."

Turkey extends condolences to Egypt over plane crash

Hurriyet Daily News, 20.05.2016



Turkey has extended condolences to Egypt and all countries whose citizens have been killed in the plane crash that Egypt says may have been caused by a terrorist attack.

"We extend condolences to all countries and peoples who had their citizens on the plane, Egyptian people being in the first place, due to this deplorable incident," the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in an official statement released. It added that it "was learned with deep sadness" that the Egypt Air jet carrying 66 passengers and crew from Paris to Cairo disappeared from radar over the Mediterranean on May 19 in a crash.

Ties between Ankara and Cairo have been strained since Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi staged a military coup against Islamist President Mohamed Morsi, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, after mass protests.

In early February, while categorically ruling out meeting with former army chief el-Sisi until death penalty sentences for Morsi and other Muslim Brotherhood leaders were lifted, Erdoğan gave a green light for ministerial-level talks between the two estranged countries. In April, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry attended the 13th Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Istanbul and handed the term presidency to Turkey on behalf of el-Sisi.

Erdoğan approves law on Turkey-EU readmission deal

Hurriyet Daily News, 19.05.2016



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has approved a law on an agreement between Ankara and Brussels on the readmission of people residing in the EU without authorization.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's approval of the law was announced by his press office, with a note that it was sent to the Prime Ministry in order to be published in the Official Gazette, thus to enter into force. As it is not published on national holidays, the Official Gazette was not published on May 19, the Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day.

Referring to a series of summits between Turkey and the EU on Nov. 29, March 7 and March 18, which led to the agreement, Turkish and European leaders said the aim was to stop tragedies in the Aegean Sea, to thwart human traffickers and to manage the migration in a controlled way

“From the very beginning, some people have been trying to distort this matter by spelling disaster. They say ‘Turkey will receive all the illegal migrants in the EU’ or ‘Turkey will become a refugee buffer zone’. They are just trying to unsettle the Turkish people with lies and groundless remarks. They claim the readmission agreement makes it possible to deport without any questions or conditions, which is also distorting the truth.

There can be no such thing because readmission is only possible if the relevant country approves and consents,” Erdoğan said in a speech.”There are precise conditions. If the European Union does not take the necessary steps then Turkey will not implement the agreement,” he also warned, saying that “everything promised and specified by the accord” must be put in place by June 2016 “at the latest.”

Turkey summons EU envoy over remarks on migrant deal

Reuters, 19.05.2016



Turkey has summoned the top European Union envoy in the country to complain about comments he made last week on the migration deal between Ankara and the EU, Turkish foreign ministry sources said.

Turkish officials took offense at the EU envoy to Turkey Hansjörg Haber's use of a German saying to describe how a plan to ease visa restrictions for Turks travelling to Europe had started off in an orderly way but run into problems recently. Turkey and the EU have been discussing visa liberalization since 2013 and agreed in March as part of a deal to halt waves of illegal immigration from Turkey to the EU.

But progress halted when Brussels insisted that Ankara must also reform its tough anti-terror laws for another part of the deal - further talks on EU membership for Turkey - to resume. Turkey said that was out of the question. Haber told a group of journalists that the old German saying of "Start like a Turk and end like a German," had been reversed in the case of fulfilling the 72 criteria needed for the EU to grant Turkish citizens visa-free travel inside the EU.

"We have a proverb. 'To start like a Turk and end like a German,' but it has been just the opposite here [visa liberalization process]," said Haber. "It started like a German and is being finished like a Turk," he said, adding that even though the visa liberalization process had started in 2013, there had been problems lately in completing it.

"We have conveyed the anger felt over the ambassador's comments to him, and that we condemn the expressions he used," one foreign ministry source said. Turkey's EU Affairs Minister Volkan Bozkır has criticized Haber for his remark, saying they were not appropriate for an ambassador and called him to explain what he meant.

"No ambassador has the right to humiliate the people of the country he is in and say something about its president. This is the first rule of diplomacy," he tweeted. The disputed migration deal includes funding to help Turkey care for migrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia who had hoped to use its shores to take boats to Greece.

Turkey says the EU demand to ease anti-terror laws, which some European leaders and rights groups says Ankara uses to stifle dissent, was not possible at a time when it is battling the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants.

Erdoğan, Obama discuss urgency of weakening ISIL, cooperation against PKK

Hurriyet Daily News, 19.05.2016



Turkish President Erdoğan and U.S. President Obama held a lengthy phone call discussing the war in Syria and efforts to defeat jihadists from the ISIL as well as Turkey's fight against militants of the outlawed PKK.

Both Erdoğan's office and the White House released readouts almost simultaneously. "President Erdoğan and U.S. President Obama who tackled the current situation in Syria agreed on the urgency of displaying a joint effort for the purpose of weakening and vanquishing [ISIL] and ensuring the [elimination] of its capacity to launch terror attacks in Turkey, Europe and other regions," Erdoğan's office said.

"The two leaders drew attention to the importance of international cooperation on issues of ensuring the continuity of the cease-fire in Syria and making progress in the political transition process," it said. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu told his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, that he would resign if Moscow could show any evidence that Turkey has been aiding ISIL.

"I am ready to resign if you have any evidence that Turkey is helping DAESH," Çavuşoğlu said at the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) meeting in Vienna. Russia has repeatedly accused Ankara of helping ISIL smuggle oil via its Syrian border. Erdoğan has previously condemned the claims, which he described as "despicable."

It was not yet clear which side, Erdoğan or Obama, initiated the phone call. On May 20, officials from the Turkish president's office told Hürriyet Daily News that the U.S. side requested the phone call.

The two leaders also dealt with the ongoing threats posed by the PKK against Turkey. "The two leaders discussed opportunities for deepened cooperation in the fight against all terrorist groups, including the PKK. In this context, the president emphasized the U.S. commitment to Turkey's security as a NATO ally," the White House readout said.

After the collapse of a de facto phase of non-conflict last July, Turkey's southeast has seen some of its worst fighting since the height of the conflict between Turkey's security forces and the PKK in the 1990s. Erdoğan, who had spearheaded the peace process between the state and the PKK, has ruled out any return to negotiations and has vowed to crush the militant group. Thousands of people, including hundreds of civilians, have been killed in the violence since July 2015. The PKK is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey, the European Union and the United States.

NATO assures Turkey of ongoing support in fight against ISIL

Anadolu Agency, 19.05.2016



Turkey is among the NATO allies most affected by ISIL terrorism, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg stated. Addressing a press conference in Brussels before a meeting of NATO foreign ministers on security challenges in Afghanistan, Middle East, North Africa and Russia, Stoltenberg vowed that NATO would continue to “stand in solidarity with Turkey.”

“We have increased our presence and continue to implement our assurances given to Turkey,” he said, referring to the delicate situation in Kilis, which has been subjected to deadly shelling by ISIL from across the border in Syria.

Stoltenberg said the alliance’s AWACS surveillance aircraft were currently flying over Turkey, while the number of port visits, port calls of naval ships from NATO allied countries had increased. “Everything we can do to support the efforts of the coalition fighting ISIL is important for Turkey,” he added.

Turkey has been hit by a series of rocket attacks originating from ISIL-held Syrian territory since mid-January. A total of 21 people have been killed and scores have been wounded by rockets fired at the border province of Kilis since Jan. 18. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmu - speaking after a cabinet meeting chaired by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan - said that over the last three months 55 rockets have been fired by ISIL into Kilis. The Turkish military has shelled ISIL positions in retaliation, striking ISIL gun emplacements and ammunition dumps in the Suran, Arshak, Ikdakh and Ihtimalat regions of Syria. The retaliation initially killed 50 militants, with this figure later rising to 64.

Mogherini: EU wants close cooperation with new Turkish government

Anadolu Agency, 20.05.2016



The European Union's foreign policy chief said that she expects the new Turkish government to endorse the EU-Turkey deal reached with the previous government and to continue close cooperation to address the refugee crisis.

“We concluded an agreement with the Turkish government, not with one person,” Federica Mogherini told, dismissing speculations about the future of the deal after the impending departure of Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davuto lu. “If the new Turkish government decides on a policy change then we must discuss this. But I expect the new government to endorse this agreement,” Mogherini added.

Davuto lu's announcement earlier this month that he would not serve out his full term led to media speculation about the future of the EU-Turkey deal, which was hammered out by European leaders and Davuto lu to stop illegal migration and accelerate Turkey's EU membership process. Mogherini underlined the importance of enhancing cooperation between Brussels and Ankara, despite current hurdles in implementing the refugee deal, and promised visa liberalization for Turkish citizens if all conditions are met.

“It is not only about the refugee problem, we have a wider political agenda with Turkey. Both of us would like to see an end to the civil war in Syria, a solution to the Cyprus problem, and both of us face the threat of terrorism. We can be partners in many fields and there is a political will on the European side to cooperate with Turkey in a constructive way,” she stated.

The EU-Turkey deal aims to discourage irregular migration through the Aegean Sea by taking stricter measures against human traffickers and improving the conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

It also allows for the acceleration of Turkey's EU membership bid and visa-free travel for Turkish nationals within the Schengen area, on the condition that Ankara meets 72 requirements set by the EU. Ankara has met most of the requirements, but the EU's demands for change in Turkey's anti-terrorism law have led to a deadlock in negotiations.

Mogherini expressed hope for reviving Turkey's stalled membership talks, despite current disagreements between Brussels and Ankara over the fight against terrorism, human rights, and press freedom. “I very much hope that the EU can open two new chapters in Turkey's membership talks within this year -- Chapters 23 and 24 on democratic rights, basic freedoms and justice,” she said. “These chapters are crucial in order to address significant questions. But before opening these chapters, the necessary criteria should be fulfilled,” Mogherini added.

EgyptAir flight crashes in Med Sea with 66 on board

AP, 19.05.2016



An EgyptAir flight from Paris to Cairo with 66 passengers and crew on board crashed into the Mediterranean Sea off the Greek island of Crete early May 19, Egyptian and Greek officials said, while Egypt's aviation minister said the crash was more likely caused by a terror attack than technical problems.

EgyptAir said the Airbus A320 vanished 16 kilometers after it entered Egyptian airspace, around 280 kilometers off Egypt's coastline north of the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria. Their account fits closely with an account from Konstantinos Lintzerakos, director of Greece's Civil Aviation Authority.

Egyptian military aircraft and navy ships were taking part in a search operation off Egypt's Mediterranean coast to locate the debris of the plane, which was carrying 56 passengers, including one child and two babies, and 10 crew members. Signs of possible wreckage were found later in the day off the Greek island of Crete in a search for the missing flight in the Mediterranean, a Greek military spokesman told AFP.

"There have been finds southeast of Crete, inside the Cairo flight information area," General Staff spokesman Vassilis Beletsiotis said, adding that an Egyptian C-130 plane had spotted the floating objects, and ships would be sent to investigate.

In Cairo, Egyptian Civil Aviation Minister Sherif Fathi told a news conference that he did not want to prematurely draw conclusions, but that indications suggest a terror attack as more likely cause of the crash. Answering a reporter's question on whether a technical failure was behind the crash, Fathi said: "On the contrary ... if you thoroughly analyze the situation, the possibility of having a different action or a terror attack, is higher than the possibility of having a technical failure." But he cautioned that the truth would not be known before the investigation is concluded.

Earlier, Egyptian Prime Minister Sherif Ismail also said a terror attack could not be ruled out. "We cannot rule anything out," Ismail told reporters at Cairo airport. Greek Defense Minister Panos Kammenos said EgyptAir flight 804 made abrupt turns and suddenly lost altitude just before vanishing from radar at around 2:45 a.m. Egyptian time.

Kammenos said the aircraft was 10-15 miles inside the Egyptian Flight Information Region (FIR) and at an altitude of 37,000 feet. "It turned 90 degrees left and then a 360 degree turn toward the right, dropping from 38,000 to 15,000 feet and then it was lost at about 10,000 feet," he said. EgyptAir said the Egyptian military had received an emergency signal from the aircraft, an apparent reference to an Emergency Locator Transmitter, a battery powered device designed to automatically give out a signal in the event of a sudden loss of altitude or impact.

The Egyptian military denied it had received a distress call and Egypt's state-run daily Al-Ahram quoted an unidentified airport official as saying the pilot did not send one. The absence of a distress call suggests that whatever sent the aircraft plummeting into the Mediterranean was both sudden and brief. French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault offered to send military planes and boats to join the Egyptian search for wreckage.

"We are at the disposition of the Egyptian authorities with our military capacities, with our planes, our boats to help in the search for this plane," he said. He spoke after French President François Hollande held an emergency meeting at the Élysée Palace.

Exploring the possibility of a terror attack, Egyptian security officials said they were running background checks on the passengers to see if any of them had links to extremists. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

In Paris, the city's prosecutor's office has opened an investigation into the incident. "No hypothesis is favored or ruled out at this stage," the prosecutor's office said in a statement. Egypt's chief prosecutor, Nabil Sadeq, followed suit, ordering an "urgent" investigation into the crash. Greece also joined the search and rescue operation, officials at the Hellenic National Defense General Staff said.

World powers soften deadline for deal on Syria's political 'transition'

AFP, 17.05.2016



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said that the August 1 date set for Syria's warring parties to agree the framework of a political transition is a "target" not a deadline. Under the terms of the peace plan agreed by the U.N. Security Council, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime and his opposition had until August to agree the outlines of a political process.

But, speaking after a meeting of the ISSG, Kerry said: "The August date is not a drop date, it's a target date, and we all recognize that if we make significant progress and we're moving we will respect that process."

Any party to the Syrian war that is found to repeatedly break a shaky ceasefire agreement could risk foregoing the protection of the truce, the ISSG said. "Where the [ISSG] co-chairs believe that a party to the cessation of hostilities has engaged in a pattern of persistent non-compliance, the Task Force could refer such behavior to the ISSG Ministers or those designated by the Ministers to determine appropriate action, including the exclusion of such parties from the arrangements of the cessation and the protection it affords them," the group said in a statement, according to Reuters.

The ISSG, including the U.S., Russia, the United Nations, Turkey, and several Western and Arab nations, met in Vienna to discuss how a cessation of hostilities agreement reached in February could be revived. The group also called on the U.N. to carry out air drops over besieged areas in Syria as regime blockades in rebel-held areas were stopping all food and medical aid in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

“Starting on June 1, if the U.N. is denied humanitarian access to any of these designated areas, the International Syria Support calls on the World Food Programme to immediately carry out a programme for air bridges and air drops to all of those areas in need,” Kerry said.

EU, Turkey row over terror puts deal at risk

Hurriyet Daily News, 17.05.2016



A row between Turkey and the European Union over the former’s anti-terror law has put a deal between the parties to curb migrant flows into the bloc in exchange for visa liberalization at risk.

Turkish FM Çavuşoğlu has reiterated that Ankara will not change its anti-terrorism law, claiming that EU pressure on the issue constitutes “support for terrorism,” while EU Council President Donald Tusk has said Brussels is ready to fulfil its side of the deal so long as Turkey “plays by the rules.” “Telling us to change anti-terror law when we are fighting PKK and ISIL amounts to supporting terrorism.

We will never give in to such impositions,” Çavuşoğlu said. However, Tusk warned Turkey the next day that it should not try to change the rules of the Turkey-EU deal. “With regard to the EU-Turkey deal, let me just say that the EU stands ready to fulfil its part. I am confident about the future of our cooperation as long as Turkey agrees to play by the rules, and not with the rules,” Tusk said during a joint press conference with Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen in Copenhagen.

“Our strategy for the migration crisis works. In May only 60 irregular migrants [crossed] daily to Greece. In October last year that number was almost 7,000,” he said in a post on his Twitter account on the same day. The European Commission proposed visa-free travel to the Schengen zone for Turks as part of a deal that would see Turkey stem the refugee flow to Europe in exchange for accelerating its EU membership process.

However, among five remaining benchmarks for Turkey to address in order to receive visa-free travel, the EU has called for changes to Ankara’s legislation on terrorism – a demand rejected by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. “The EU says, ‘you will change the anti-terror law in return for visas’ ... Pardon me, but we are going our way and you can go yours,” Erdoğan said in a blunt message to the EU.

The European Parliament halted the visa liberalization process for Turkish citizens in the Schengen zone, citing Turkey's failure to fulfil the necessary criteria. Çavuşoğlu criticized the "double standards" in EU practices, saying some EU countries became members despite failing to meet the requirements to do so.

"You [the EU] have given visa-free travel to candidate countries without even starting the negotiation phase. Isn't it then the right of Turkish citizens to enjoy this, too? We are talking about visa-free travel, not membership," he said. Stating that without Turkey, the EU would not be able to become a global power and solve its economic problems, Çavuşoğlu called for "good sense" in visa discussions.

"We will discuss the visa issue with the EU in a sensible manner. We need to make a road map. Everybody will keep their promises," he said. Tusk also criticized the former mayor of London, Boris Johnson, for "crossing boundaries" by saying the EU was behaving "like Adolf Hitler."

"I cannot stay silent," Tusk was quoted as saying by AFP in Copenhagen. Johnson, a leading campaigner for Britain to leave the EU, "crossed the boundaries" of acceptable political debate, Tusk said. "Such absurd arguments would be completely ignored if they hadn't been formulated by one of the most influential politicians of the ruling party. Boris Johnson crossed the boundaries of rational discussion, demonstrating political amnesia," he added.

A-bomb survivors want Obama to meet, apologize in Hiroshima

AP, 19.05.2016



A group representing Japanese survivors of U.S. atomic bombings urged President Barack Obama to hear their stories and apologize when he visits Hiroshima.

Two leaders of nationwide group told that many survivors want an apology, though they have long avoided an outright demand for one out of fear that it would be counterproductive. Toshiki Fujimori said he found it awkward to hear government officials say they are not asking for an apology. "I suspect there was a pressure to create an atmosphere that would make it easier for Obama to visit Hiroshima," Fujimori said.

"But many of the survivors don't think they can do without an apology at all." He said the survivors want Obama to know that their suffering is not limited to immediate damage and visible, physical scars. They also suffered discrimination at work, in marriage and in other areas of their lives, from their own people in Japan, said Fujimori, who nearly died in the blast at age 1. The U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, killed 140,000 people and nearly destroyed the city. A second atomic attack three days later on Nagasaki in southern Japan killed 73,000 more people.



About 180,000 people recognized by the government as survivors are still alive. Many have remained unmarried and without children because of concerns about birth defects, or have suffered from cancer and other radiation-induced illnesses.

Obama is to visit Hiroshima after the Group of Seven summit in central Japan, becoming the first serving American president to do so. In announcing Obama's visit, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said he will escort him and suggested that no apology is necessary.

A Cabinet-approved statement signed by Abe last August states that the U.S. atomic bombings "caused an extremely regrettable humanitarian situation because of its widespread damage," but does not call them war crimes. It says it is more important to make an effort toward achieving a nuclear-free world "rather than seeking an apology and remorse from the United States at this point, 70 years after the war."

Washington said Obama won't apologize and a meeting with survivors is unlikely. Japan's government has also told U.S. officials that it is not expecting an apology, according to Japanese and American officials.

That apparently prompted the survivors to try to let Obama know their feelings and hope that he will be committed to a nuclear-free world, which they say can be achieved only by learning and coming to terms with the past.

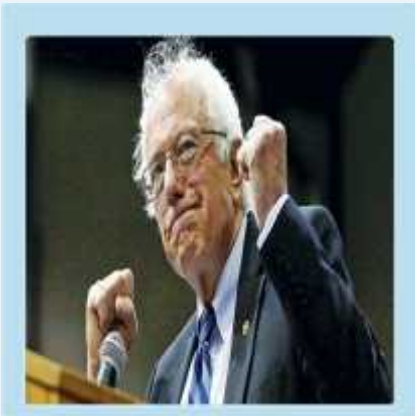
Terumi Tanaka, a survivor of the Nagasaki atomic bombing who serves as secretary-general of the Japan Confederation of A and H Bomb Sufferers Organizations, said he wishes that Obama will apologize at least to the survivors.

"Families of the victims, those who lost their children. They deserve an apology and I really hope Mr. Obama will at least apologize to them," he said, adding that he hopes Obama will be touched and gain a deeper understanding from being in Hiroshima.

But Shizuka Kamei, a national lawmaker from Hiroshima whose sister died in the blast, said Obama is not welcome without an apology. "If he is not going to show remorse or offer an apology, he shouldn't come," he told a separate news conference. "Is he going to Hiroshima for sightseeing? Then please come after stepping down as president. I'll be there to welcome him."

Clinton claims Kentucky, Sanders takes Oregon in Democratic duel

AFP, 18.05.2016



Hillary Clinton claimed a narrow victory in Kentucky as she sought to put away Bernie Sanders, but her resilient rival for the Democratic presidential nomination bounced back to snatch a win in Oregon.

With the Kentucky race too close for most U.S. networks to call a winner, Clinton declared victory shortly after Kentucky's secretary of state Alison Lundergan Grimes announced. "We just won Kentucky! Thanks to everyone who turned out," Clinton tweeted. With 99.8 percent of Blue Grass state precincts reporting, Clinton led Sanders by 46.8 percent to 46.3 percent - a margin of less than 2,000 votes.

Should the results hold, the win would blunt Sanders's momentum and help Clinton move closer toward clinching the Democratic presidential nomination. But the psychological win was short-lived. Half an hour after polls closed in Oregon, U.S. networks projected Sanders the winner there, besting Clinton 53 percent to 47 percent.

"We just won Oregon, and we're going to win California," Sanders told thousands of supporters in Carson, California as he predicted victory in the nation's largest state, which votes on June 7. Sanders, a self-declared democratic socialist, declared he would not be forced out of the race by narrow Clinton wins. "It appears tonight that we're going to end up with about half the delegates" in Kentucky, Sanders told the raucous rally.

"Let me be as clear as I can be... We are in 'til the last ballot is cast," he said to a huge roar. Clinton has a commanding lead in the all-important national delegate count and is marching toward vying for the presidency in the Nov. 8 general election despite her string of recent primary losses.

Victories in Kentucky and Oregon would have definitively halted her slide and helped reverse the narrative that her campaign is showing significant weakness ahead of an almost certain showdown with Donald Trump, the Republican Party's presumptive nominee. Trump -- the last man standing in the GOP race -- was projected Oregon's Republican winner, moving closer to the 1,237 delegates he needs to officially claim the party's mantle in 2016.

Donald Trump should reach out to the national security community

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Donald Trump is under pressure to persuade Republicans who have opposed him thus far to change their minds. National security and foreign policy are areas in which he has a long way to go.

Donald Trump's performance on these topics was very weak during the primaries, prompting an open letter from Republican experts saying they would never work with him. Donald Trump responded with characteristic bravado, but obviously he does and should care what the experts say. They are knowledgeable, and he will need their input to govern.

Trump even tried to win some of them over with his "Big Speech" at the Center for the National Interest, the citadel for foreign policy realism — a view that acknowledges the role of power, while cautioning leaders to refrain from turning to the military option before exhausting other capabilities. The Washington Examiner, in its coverage of the letter by Trump's critics, interviewed some of the signatories. Bryan McGrath, a defense consultant who helped coordinate the letter, told the Examiner that he would continue to make sure Trump doesn't win the presidency.

Beyond the speech, what Trump can do to mollify the concerns of the national security community remains to be seen. He will have to show a firmer grasp than he has so far of tools for enhancing our security.

During an interview with Meet the Press, Trump compared the Iran nuclear deal with some "bad contracts" he made throughout his business career. Although a strict equation of business shrewdness with foreign policy experience may be a bridge too far to cross, the interview suggests that Trump might hold Iran accountable for its violations.

Imagine Tehran as a dragon — a mythological creature fighting against enemies and expanding its area through violence. Where its nuclear weapons program is concerned, modern-day Iran is like a dragon. Tehran claims peaceful intent while engaging in suspect activities at hidden sites, sponsoring terrorism, and facilitating the murder of innocent civilians at home and abroad.

On the day of Trump's April speech, one of his foreign policy advisers who focuses on the Middle East, Walid Phares, posted an essay on FoxNews.com: "Trump lays out a new vision for American foreign policy leadership." He uses Iran to illustrate what he sees as Trump's potential for vision and leadership in the Oval Office. "President Trump will never allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon, and he will confront and contain Iranian expansionism," he writes. Consistent with Trump's reasoning about Iran, House Speaker Paul Ryan wrote earlier this month that the promises President Barack Obama made about the Iran deal have started to unravel.



The deal with Iran is one area where Trump, bipartisan experts, and independent security specialists agree with the speaker's assessment. Trump and his critics subscribe to Ryan's bottom line: "The administration can spin it anyway it likes, but this was a bad deal."

David Albright, founder of the Institute for Science and International Security, said that the six-month agreement reached in Geneva in 2013 might be a good or bad deal, depending on how long-term issues were settled.

These issues included Iran's claimed right to enrich uranium on its own soil. Albright said that this view "had been rejected flat out by the United States." The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) agreed. Since 2013, the Obama administration has backed away from its original position — confirming Trump, Ryan, and other critics' assessment of the deal.

In the wake of David Samuels's New York Times Magazine profile of Obama national security advisor Ben Rhodes, Albright has become critical of the way the White House sold the Iran deal on the Capitol Hill. Samuels reported that Rhodes shaped the administration's narrative to portray the deal as an effort to reinforce the status of the moderates in the Iranian regime over the hardliners. Upon reading the piece, Albright said he wished that the White House was "...just putting out facts. They exaggerated and overstated to sell the deal."

What about the nuclear deal's supposed moderating impact on Tehran? General Lloyd Austin, the outgoing commander of U.S. Central Command, said before Congress on March 8: "Iran maintains hegemonic ambitions and will continue to pose a threat to the region." The Iranian threat network consists of the Revolutionary Guard, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, regional surrogates, and proxies.

Trump needs to rip a page from Austin's playbook on the continuing threat Iran poses. More to the point, Trump needs to consult with the national security community on how to go beyond the Obama administration's approach.

Trump should act to persuade national security experts that he is fit to serve. As of March 2, they were united in opposition to a Trump presidency. In their open letter, members of the community wrote: "as committed and loyal Republicans...we commit ourselves to working energetically to prevent the election of someone so utterly unfitted to the office."

In view of the path Ryan has laid out, here is how Trump could adjust his policies to make them more palatable while maintaining the principles he is in the process of expanding. He needs to go beyond his rhetoric on the Iran deal. One way to do this would be to retract the concession the Obama administration made in granting Iran's claimed right to enrich uranium on its own soil.

Trump should showcase his image as a hard-hitting bargainer. President Ronald Reagan used his experience as a tough negotiator with unions and in the movie industry to parlay successful arms control reductions with the Soviet Union.

And Trump should expand his universe beyond his immediate circle. To his credit, Trump did meet with former secretary of state Henry Kissinger, the "gray eminence" of the Republican foreign policy establishment.



And during his trip to Washington to meet party leaders, Trump met with another Republican heavyweight — former Secretary of State James A. Baker III. Doing all of this may not persuade each of Trump's determined critics inside the Republican party, but it might persuade enough of them to carry the day in November.



Announcements & Reports

Myanmar-DPRK Relations: Disarmament and Nuclear Nonproliferation Dimension

Source : CSIS

Weblink : <https://www.csis.org/analysis/issues-insights-vol-16-no-9-myanmar-dprk-relations-disarmament-and-nuclear-nonproliferation>

Young Arab Voices: Moving Youth Policy from Debate into Action

Source : Chatham House

Weblink : <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/young-arab-voices-moving-youth-policy-debate-action>

Military Health Engagement

Source : CSIS

Weblink : <http://csis.org/publication/military-health-engagement>

Upcoming Events

The Search for Europe

Date : 21 May 2016

Place : Brussels - Belgium

Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/the-search-for-europe/>

The UK and the EU: Managing the Euro and the Single Market

Date : 21 May 2016

Place : London - UK

Website : <https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/uk-and-eu-managing-euro-and-single-market>

Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union

Date : 22 May 2016

Place : Brussels - Belgium

Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/534-competitive-gains-in-the-economic-and-monetary-union/>

The Future of Capitalist Democracy: UK-Japan Perspectives

Date : 23 May 2016

Place : London - UK

Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>



Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?

Date : 24 May 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/524-emerging-markets-and-europe-time-for-different-relationships/>

What future for Europe's Social Models?

Date : 25 May 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/526-what-future-for-europes-social-models/>

Challenges for Growth in Europe

Date : 26 May 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/521-challenges-for-growth-in-europe/>

Global Governance of Public Goods: Asian and European Perspectives

Date : 26 May 2016
Place : Paris - France
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/529-global-governance-of-public-goods-asian-and-european-perspectives/>

The Future of the Welfare State

Date : 28 May 2016
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>