

EU Minister: Turkey wants cooperation, not monitoring process

Hurriyet Daily News, 18.04.2017



Ankara is not in a position to accept political blackmail, Turkey's EU Minister Ömer Çelik has said, amid possibility the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) could degrade Turkey's status and reopen its monitoring process, which could lead to a suspension of its accession to the bloc.

The Turkish government believes that Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) should not reopen its monitoring process for Turkey, he said, stressing that instead they wanted an attitude of cooperation. "We want to call on those that will make the decision.

What is your agenda of solidarity for a country whose sovereignty and democracy are under threat?" Çelik told reporters on April 18. "Have you displayed cooperation with us and has Turkey rejected it? On the contrary, you have adopted a negative and exclusionist attitude," he said.

Çelik criticized European institutions for failing to lend support to Turkey over its fight against terrorism after the July 15, 2016, failed coup attempt. "If there are things that we should progress on, let's clearly put its name and decide on a method, however, Turkey will not accept political blackmail," he said, adding that Ankara is ready to cooperate and form dialogue with the EU. He added that the EU and Turkey should discuss all the aspects of the current state of affairs between Ankara and Brussels at a leader's summit.

Turkish FM: Trump, Erdoğan to meet in Washington in May

Hurriyet Daily News, 19.04.2017



U.S. President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will meet in Washington in May ahead of a NATO summit, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has said.

“Mr. Trump called our president to congratulate him on the referendum results. They discussed bilateral relations and have agreed to meet in Washington. We, as foreign ministers, will determine the appropriate dates for the meeting,” Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said at a press conference in Ankara.

Çavuşoğlu said the two leaders had agreed to come together before a NATO summit that will take place in late May in Brussels. Çavuşoğlu spoke by phone with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson after Trump and Erdoğan's phone call.

After Erdoğan's narrow win in the referendum to implement an executive presidency, Trump congratulated the Turkish leader in a phone call, in contrast to the muted reaction of European leaders to the result, which has been challenged by the opposition.

The two leaders are likely to meet in Washington within the first half of May, a Turkish official told the Hürriyet Daily News. Çavuşoğlu also said the U.S. had not decided on whether to launch a Raqqa offensive in Raqqa aiming to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) with Syrian Kurdish militia.

In his phone conversation with Trump, Erdoğan reiterated Turkey's rhetoric against U.S. cooperation with the People's Protection Units (YPG), while claiming that Syrian Kurdish militia have enforced demographic changes in regions they have captured and would do so again if they entered Raqqa province, the Turkish official told the Daily News on condition of anonymity.

The official reiterated a proposal Turkey made to the U.S. during a visit by Tillerson to Ankara last month which called for the liberation of Raqqa operation by other elements of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that excluded YPG fighters.

Turkey and the U.S. are at odds over the status of the YPG. Although Turkey has constantly attempted to designate the group as terrorists, the U.S. sees the YPG as effective partners on the ground in their fight against ISIL.

Erdoğan: Trump will do what Obama failed to do about Gülen

Reuters, 21.04.2017



U.S. President Donald Trump will do what former President Barack Obama failed to do regarding the U.S.-based Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen, accused of masterminding the July 2016 failed coup attempt, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said April 20.

“I believe Trump will do what Obama failed to do in this regard,” Erdoğan said in an interview with private broadcaster A News. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said he expected the U.S. to make the necessary administrative decision to prevent Gülen from operating a “terrorist organization” in Pennsylvania.

“This terrorist leader is residing in a country, which is our strategic ally, and it is upsetting not only me but also the Turkish nation,” he added. “I think they will at least call him to account,” he said. Ankara says the Fethullahist Terror Organization (FETÖ), headed by Gülen, orchestrated the July 15, 2016, attempted takeover, which left 249 people killed and nearly 2,200 injured.

According to the Turkish government, FETÖ is behind a long-running campaign to overthrow the state through the infiltration of Turkish institutions, particularly the military, police and judiciary. Gülen has been living in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania since 1999.

Following the failed coup attempt, Turkey sent the U.S. an official request for Gülen’s extradition based on a 1979 treaty between the two countries. Upon Washington’s request, Turkey sent another file in August 2016 along with evidence to the U.S. that summarized four previously sent files.

Afterwards, a U.S. delegation visited Turkey at the end of August 2016 and monitored those documents. The U.S. then wanted an additional batch of files and evidence from Turkey, which Justice Minister Bekir Bozda presented to then-U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch during a meeting in October 2016.

The extradition treaty includes an article that the suspect should be provisionally arrested until the extradition process starts. Erdoğan is officially scheduled to visit the U.S. on May 16 and 17, with Gülen’s extradition to top the agenda as well as Syria and Iraq.

Lack of US-Russian bargain costly for Turkey

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.04.2017



The uncertainties caused by the absence of a grand bargain between Russia and the United States are having a costly effect on both Turkey and the rest of the world, according to Mustafa Aydın, the rector of Kadir Has University.

The lack of response to Russian moves in the Caucasus led to Russia's action in Syria, said Aydın, the rector of Kadir Has University, adding that the United States opened the door of the Middle East to the Russians, meaning Turkey now has a Russian presence in the north and the south for the first time ever. Where do you think United States- Russian relations are heading?

It is time for there to be a grand bargain which we have not had had since Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency for the second time. Former U.S. President [Barack Obama's] reset policy did not work and, in fact, it resulted [in the situation in] Georgia and Ukraine.

The Russians felt sufficiently confident to enter Georgia in 2008, and Ukraine in 2014. They did not see a response from the West in Crimea, and they calculated that the U.S. and the West would not respond in Ukraine either.

They are taking these steps in the absence of a grand bargain; what do you mean by a grand bargain?

This is a tacit understanding – a reciprocal acceptance of the boundaries of the expected behavior. This is something that has not happened in the post-Cold War era. We need a grand bargain. Looking from the neorealist perspective of international relations, when we have a hegemon or hegemonic relations, we see a more orderly system when they agree.

It does not mean it would be more fair, but more predictable. In the absence of such an understanding, you have a number of powers who are competing for influence, and that will lead to conflict. In order to avoid these kinds of wars, we need a kind of an arrangement among the bigger powers.

We need this at present because the principles and rules of the international system have decayed and been violated. Both Russia and the West are accusing each other of disregarding rules and previous understandings of behavior in cases like Kosovo, Crimea, Ukraine or Libya.

Do you see that grand bargain coming?



I can't see it coming. There seems to have been certain overtures from the American side since there was a change of administration. U.S. President Donald Trump said during the campaign that he could work with Russia. But we do not know whether Russia wants a deal. It looks like the Russians benefit from the uncertainty; they think that they are able to manage the current uncertainty.

The second issue is the uncertainty surrounding the Trump administration. They indicated that they want to do business with Putin, but we do not know what kind of deal they want. Also, are he and his team capable or able to understand the future of the international system and design it? This is the big question mark. But unless we have a grand bargain, we are moving closer and closer to bigger conflicts.

So the absence of a grand bargain lands us in deep uncertainties then.

That's the problem in the neighborhood but globally as well. Most of the political dynamics stem from these uncertainties. When countries are not certain about the future of the system, they do not feel constrained by the system and they start exploring.

How does the lack of a grand bargain affect Turkey?

Ukraine happened because the West and the U.S. could not respond to the Russian move in Georgia, which encouraged Russia to become more daring in international relations. Russia had been and still is telling the West that it does not want to see NATO on its border. They are in perennial fear of dismemberment. The Russians feel they need buffer zones to protect themselves. They wanted the Caucasus and Ukraine to be a buffer zone.

But they did not stop after 2014. Two things happened: Russia started testing the borders of NATO territory in Europe. They violated the airspace of even Portugal. They violated Turkish airspace in the Black Sea several times to see whether the Western alliance is ready to respond and how many seconds it takes to show a response. That's how you prepare for a whole front war.

The second thing is that they have heavily fortified and militarized Crimea; they have taken 70 percent of the Ukrainian navy and have been investing heavily in the Black Sea fleet [and aim] to dominate Black Sea.

The war in Crimea in the 19th century occurred to gain dominance in the Black Sea and the Turkish straits. Whoever dominates them can project power into Eastern and Central Europe. Today, Russia dominates the Black Sea so Russians are projecting power toward Eastern and Central Europe.

You are saying that this was not the case until recently?

Until 2011, Turkey was the biggest navy in the Black Sea; both in terms of number of ships and in terms of firepower. Now it is the Russians. NATO only recently started to respond to this challenge. There is another offshoot of this development: After they gained dominance over the Black Sea, they took a step in Syria, and this was an opportunity provided to them by the Obama administration.



The U.S. totally dominated and controlled the Middle East. They sealed the Middle East off, especially after the end of the Cold War. But while the Obama administration was withdrawing from Iraq as it took the decision to not intervene in the Middle East again, they opened the door to Russians, allowing them to come to the Middle East for the first time in their history.

The Middle East and Black Sea theaters of operations are linked because the Russian operation in Syria was logistically supported by the Black Sea from Crimea. For the first time in history, the Russians have permanent military bases in the Middle East because what they had in the Syrian port of Tartus was not a military base.

Now they have two permanent military bases. This is also the first time in history that Turkey finds itself sandwiched by Russian forces. Almost all of the north of the Black Sea is under their control; they are in Armenia on the Turkish border and they are in Syria, where they limit where Turkish forces can act in Syria.

Is the Turkish government concerned about this?

It should be.

Why should Turkey be concerned about Russia? Perhaps it does not see it as a foe?

Russia could be our friend or enemy at the same time. You have to act according to the realities on the ground.

What kind of a reality do you see on the ground for Turkey?

I see a country whose options in international politics are very limited, a country who is strategically surrounded and a country whose opportunities to create diversions or different alternatives are becoming more and more limited.

Turkey was very active in the Black Sea. But now the Russians control the situation and they block any kind of regional multilateral cooperation scheme. Turkey was very active in the Caucasus, with many ideas; nothing of that is left. The Caucasus countries are afraid of Russia. There is no ground for multilateral cooperation either.

When that does not exist, you have to negotiate with Russia directly and bilaterally, and that's dangerous. When it sits to negotiate with a big power, a middle power like Turkey does so from a disadvantageous and weaker position. A multilateral environment always benefits small- and middle-sized powers.

Turkey's value in the Middle East depends on Turkey's ability to be part of the West, and Turkey's value for the West depends on Turkey's ability to be part of the East. The same is true in terms of Turkey-Russia-NATO relations. Turkey's values in the eyes of Russia always increased as Turkey became powerful in NATO and Turkey's power within NATO increase in proportion to Turkey's ability to respond to Russian behavior.

What do you expect in Turkish-American relations?

They are on hold. The Americans decided to put things on hold until after the referendum. And I think they will go ahead with their plan in Syria which might upset Turkey. But I think they are thinking they can contain Turkey up to a certain point. They will take the risk, until they find out they cannot contain it any longer; at that time, they might slightly change the rhetoric and part of the plans on the ground.

So they will cooperate with the Kurds in Syria?

I think so; by now they know if they do not cooperate with the Kurds it will be the Russians who cooperate with them. Why should they not? Otherwise, they wouldn't have cards to play in the Middle East.

Evacuations in Syria resume after bombing

AFP, 19.04.2017



The evacuation of four besieged Syrian towns resumed, with tight security in place for those leaving government-held areas after a weekend bombing against evacuees killed dozens including nearly 70 children.

A large convoy of buses set out from the government-held towns of Fuaa and Kafraya in Syria's Idlib province, carrying 3,000 people to the rebel-held transit point of Rashidin near Aleppo city, an AFP correspondent said. At the same time, 11 buses carrying around 300 people left rebel-held Zabadani, Serghaya and Jabal Sharqi in Damascus province, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said.

In Rashidin, security was tight after a devastating bomb attack on evacuees at the site on Saturday that according to the Observatory killed 126 people, including 68 children. Most of the dead were evacuees from the two Shiite-majority towns, with a handful of aid workers and rebels guarding the convoy also among the dead.

Dozens of wounded were taken to hospitals in nearby rebel-held territory, while others were taken to Aleppo, which government forces regained full control of late last year. Armed rebels were standing guard at Rashidin on April 19 and carefully inspecting vehicles arriving in the area.

Buses were parked in a semi-circle, forming a makeshift barrier around an area in the center of a lot where evacuees including dozens of children milled. Pro-government militiamen among those being evacuated from Fuaa and Kafraya squatted next to one bus, smoking cigarettes. Standing nearby, 55-year-old Um Joud from Fuaa said it was difficult to describe how she felt. "I'm not afraid, because everything is in God's hands," she told AFP. "Of course I would have preferred to stay in my home, but I left for the sake of my children and their lives and futures."

The evacuations are taking place under a deal between government and opposition representatives that is also seeing residents and rebels transported out from several areas under regime siege near Damascus, primarily Madaya and Zabadani.

It was brokered late last month by Qatar, a longtime opposition supporter, and Iran, a key regime ally, but its implementation had been repeatedly delayed. When April 19's evacuations are complete, a total of 8,000 people should have left Fuaa and Kafraya, including pro-government fighters and civilians.

In exchange, 2,500 civilians and rebel fighters should have left rebel areas including Zabadani and Madaya. Zabadani and Madaya "are now empty of any rebel presence," said Mayyada al-Aswad, a member of the coordinating committee for the operation on the government side. April 19's evacuations mark the end of the first stage of the deal, with a second phase due to begin in June.

Tehran, Washington in war of words over nuclear deal

Hurriyet Daily News, *20.04.2017*



Iranian and U.S. officials have engaged in a fresh war of words over a nuclear deal that aimed to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif criticized "worn-out" U.S. accusations a day after U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson accused Iran of "alarming ongoing provocations" to destabilize countries in the Middle East. "Worn-out U.S. accusations can't mask its admission of Iran's compliance" with a 2015 nuclear deal that was reached after years of grueling talks, Zarif wrote on Twitter.

Iran says its nuclear program is purely for peaceful purposes but signed a deal with world powers to restrict its fuel enrichment for 10 years in exchange for sanctions relief. Tillerson said that Tehran has so far met its obligations, but that the deal could only delay Iran's development of a nuclear weapon.

The deal "fails to achieve the objective of a non-nuclear Iran," he said, and was a product of "the same failed approach of the past that brought us to the current imminent threat we face from North Korea." Zarif said Iran's compliance had forced the U.S. administration of President Donald Trump "to change course and fulfill its own commitments."

Tillerson told reporters the review, which he announced on April 18, would not only look at Tehran's compliance with a 2015 nuclear deal but also its behavior in the region which he said undermined U.S. interests in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon.

His tough words matched those of U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who said in a visit to Saudi Arabia that Iran's destabilizing influence would have to be overcome to end the conflict in Yemen. Trump described the nuclear accord as the "worst deal ever negotiated" during his campaign and threatened to tear it up, but analysts say that is increasingly unlikely. Trump's spokesman Sean Spicer said a review would be conducted by U.S. government agencies over the next 90 days on whether to stick by the deal.

Brussels hardens Brexit line on EU workers' rights

Financial Times, *20.04.2017*



Brussels is pushing for EU workers to enjoy the full range of their EU rights for the whole of their lifetimes, enforced by the European Commission and overseen by European courts.

The hardline opening position in Brexit talks is outlined in an informal European Commission negotiating paper that in effect attempts to maintain the EU model in perpetuity for migrant workers in Britain and for British workers in other countries in the bloc. Michel Barnier, the EU's chief negotiator, wants to demand that Britain continue to apply key European social and employment rules — and extend them to family members of foreign workers.

The requirements would mean, for example, that contentious rules allowing UK child benefit to be paid to children living elsewhere in Europe would remain in force even after Brexit — potentially for decades.

In a move likely to provoke uproar in Westminster, Britain would also have to apply any "future amendments" of EU rules on benefits — meaning it could be left in the position of abiding by EU laws over which it had no say.

Equally controversially, the plans would hand the European Court of Justice a key role in policing Britain's ongoing compliance. The European Commission also proposed that it should itself have a "supervisory role" in enforcing any eventual agreement and compliance with EU law.

According to the document, ECJ oversight "should be maintained" for all issues relating to "the continued application" of EU law in Britain after Brexit. Although the commission paper mentions alternative arbitration models, this applies only to areas outside EU law, and any system would need to respect the role of the ECJ. The document sets out the commission's thinking on how to act on negotiation guidelines being developed to handle the UK's exit by the EU's other 27 member states, which will have the final say on the bloc's position.

The stance is a reflection of the EU's determination, set out in its draft negotiating guidelines, to give the highest priority to the rights of European nationals who live and work in the UK, and those of their British counterparts on the continent.

The latest draft of that document, also seen by the FT, says that guarantees of migrant rights "must be comprehensive, effective, enforceable and non-discriminatory." "Citizens should be able to exercise their rights through smooth and simple administrative procedures," it says.

Several diplomats involved in negotiations said the call for "simple administrative procedures" was a direct reference to unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles that will make it harder for EU citizens to exercise their rights in Britain — notably the 85-page form to prove that they are permanently resident in the UK.

The tougher language on citizens rights is one of several changes in the draft guidelines compared with a first draft that was circulated by EU Council president Donald Tusk last month. Others emphasise the role of the ECJ, the need for continued strong security co-operation after Brexit and the importance that any deal upholds EU standards of banking and market regulation.

The revised guidelines also make clear that the fate of two big EU agencies based in the UK — the European Medicines Agency and the European Banking Authority — must be settled "rapidly" and that Britain will have no say in their future home.

Nearly every EU country has applied to host one or both of the agencies. Diplomats said a goal was to decide on the agencies' future location by June. According to the European Commission's informal paper, Brussels' intention is that Britain must "fully cover" the cost of relocating the two agencies.

France's election is Trump vs. Merkel vs. Modi vs. Corbyn

Foreign Policy, 21.04.2017



When she launched her campaign for president of France earlier this year, Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front Party, reminded a jam-packed crowd of 3,000 activists of "the two totalitarianisms" she had pledged to fight: "Islamism" and "financialism." In the face of this "civilizational choice," Le Pen solemnly pledged to "defend the outer walls of our society."

The French go to the polls on Sunday. According to the most recent polls, Le Pen is one of four candidates who have a chance to finish in the top two and thus contest the runoff on May 7.



If you made a matrix with Le Pen's two master issues — national identity and globalization — along the side, and the two essential responses — “liberal” and “anti-liberal” — along the top, you would find that each of the four candidates fill one of the resulting boxes.

Le Pen's chief rival, Emmanuel Macron of En Marche!, is liberal on both counts; François Fillon, the Republican candidate, is illiberal on identity and liberal on the economy; and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the far left La France Insoumise, is the opposite. Astonishingly, then, on the eve of the election French voters are almost equally divided among the four cardinal positions on the great issues of the day.

This is clarifying. After the shock of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, there is a natural tendency to imagine that the Western world has been divided into great camps — the illiberal governments of Eastern Europe and the United States whose programs resemble Le Pen's, versus the Macroniste liberal regimes of Western Europe.

But beyond those frontiers lie Filloniste democracies like India and Turkey, increasingly nationalistic but nevertheless eager to exploit the benefits of globalization. Meanwhile, analogues of Mélenchon's (or Bernie Sanders') anti-globalization left have managed to reach national power only in Greece, with Syriza, but such parties are riding a wave of popularity in southern Europe, including Italy and Spain.

The future may belong neither to the pure liberals nor the pure illiberals; the convulsion that has upended the politics of the West is still in its early years. The future may belong neither to the pure liberals nor the pure illiberals; the convulsion that has upended the politics of the West is still in its early years. The French election hardly exhausts the possibilities, but it does show that we need to think beyond our binary categories.

Let's start with culture and national identity. Unlike in Germany, Sweden, and Hungary, where the refugee crisis has suddenly provoked fears that traditional identity is under siege from a wave of alien newcomers, culture has been contested terrain in France, and in French politics, for well over a decade.

As in the Netherlands (which I wrote about last month), politicians have made hay by exploiting fears that immigrants, above all Muslim immigrants, do not integrate into the national culture, cluster in ghettos, commit crimes, and of course carry out terrorist acts. Trump's electoral victory put to rest any lingering questions about the effectiveness of this political strategy. This is Le Pen's wheelhouse. She has called for restricting immigration to 10,000 per year, or about 5 percent of the current annual total. She has railed against “communitarianism,” the French term for group identity.

She has trained her fans to shout “On est chez nous!” — “It's our home!” — in response to red-flag words like “foreigner” and “Islam.” She also wants to withdraw from the European Union and the euro. For Le Pen, everything not-French is a threat to the French; the more not-French, the greater the threat. Fillon, the center-right candidate, plays these notes in a more muted vein. All serious French candidates write a campaign book, and sometimes more than one; Fillon titled his *Defeating Islamic Totalitarianism*. “France doesn't have a problem of religion,” he wrote. “It has a problem connected to Islam.”



He has called for a new form of “administrative control” of French mosques, and would change the French Constitution to permit legislators to assign an annual immigrant quota, including country-specific quotas.

The United States has long maintained just such a system, but it violates Article 1 of the French Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law irrespective of national tradition. Blatant appeals to France’s threatened Christian culture helped lift Fillon over his primary challenger, Alain Juppé, who bravely — and unsuccessfully — raised the banner of a French “identité heureuse,” or positive identity.

Though he has endured a good deal of mockery for his unwillingness to commit himself on controversial subjects, Macron has shown real courage on questions of immigration and identity. In the aftermath of the December 2016 terrorist attack on the Christmas market in Berlin, which left critics of Germany’s open-door refugee policy feeling vindicated, Macron took to the pages of *Le Monde* to proclaim that German Chancellor Angela Merkel and German society “have saved our collective dignity by welcoming refugees in distress, by housing them and by training them.” He has heaped scorn on Le Pen for seeking to divide the French against themselves. He is a passionate advocate of the EU. Macron is the candidate of the *identité heureuse*.

Mélenchon, a former Trotskyist, arrives at a cosmopolitan vision from a base of Marxist universalism. He urges his followers, as I heard him do in one speech, to stand up for “those dying abandoned in the streets, those driven to suicide at work, those drowned in the Mediterranean.” In the candidates’ debate in late March, he insisted that the French tradition of *laïcité* “must not serve as a pretext to attack Muslims,” and mocked Le Pen’s campaign against the veil by suggesting a clothing police to arrest people with green hair or women with short skirts.

But openness toward other peoples, religions, and tongues does not dictate openness toward trade and capital from beyond the border. On such matters, Le Pen and Mélenchon find much to agree on. Where the former speaks of “financiarisation,” the latter, more picturesquely, flays “the financial funds which are parasites and leeches on the productive body.” (Le Pen is not above the anti-Semitic dog whistle, as when she pointedly refers to Macron as “the candidate of the Rothschild Bank,” where the leader of *En Marche!* once worked. Mélenchon does not descend to such calumny.)

Both despise labor reforms designed to make it easier for French companies to hire and fire employees. Both lavish obloquy upon the regime of austerity dictated by the EU. Both oppose free trade and believe, along with Trump, that the national economy would somehow flourish behind protectionist walls.

After standing aside during a feverish debate about France’s 35-hour workweek, Le Pen said drolly, “I didn’t want to intervene in the ultraliberal debate” between Macron and Fillon. She’s right to say that the two are outliers in French terms. Fillon writes on his website, “I want to finally break the lock of 35 hours. This utopia, which has remained a French exception, must be abandoned.” Macron proposes allowing individual companies to negotiate a longer workweek. The 2014 “*loi Macron*,” named after the then-minister of the economy, made it slightly less cumbersome for employers to fire workers and eased the rules around Sunday opening for retailers, among other things. The law has made Macron a reviled figure on the left.



Fillon and Macron propose to further liberalize work and retirement rules, both want to cut corporate taxes, and they are free traders in a country that regards globalization with deep suspicion. However, Macron, an ex-socialist, focuses more on strategic government investment and Fillon more on budget-cutting; Macron favors a stronger EU, while Fillon caters to widespread public contempt for European governance.

Despite their reputation for Cartesian habits of thought, the French are not going to actually choose a candidate on Sunday based on categorical distinctions. Never before have so many voters remained undecided so close to Election Day; many will be making choices based on a strategic calculus rather than an assertion of preference. Never before have so many voters remained undecided so close to Election Day; many will be making choices based on a strategic calculus rather than an assertion of preference.

That calculus is: How can I prevent Marine Le Pen from becoming president of France? Le Pen's nationalism is far more radical than Fillon's, and her economic policy even more ruinous than Mélenchon's. Recent revelations that some of Le Pen's closest advisors are Nazi sympathizers have only ratcheted up fears of a National Front victory. Voters on the left are racking their brains over the ideal strategy to keep that from happening.

The likeliest beneficiary of the so-called vote utile is Macron, whom moderate leftists and moderate conservatives both feel they can live with. Macron is young, handsome, dynamic, and feels more like the future than his rivals.

Nevertheless, it's very strange to contemplate the possibility that French voters, traditionally hostile toward the free market, and deeply worried about terrorism and "communitarianism," may choose a genuine liberal as president. Macron may find that he has very little ability to bring his citizens to a more classically Anglo-American worldview, especially when the Anglo-American world is heading in the opposite direction. He could be a president without a mandate.

There are good reasons why three of the four viable candidates have rejected central elements of the liberal consensus — even if in doing so they have mined some of the public's darkest instincts. The faith in free markets and free trade no longer speaks to a middle class that feels left behind by the forces of globalization.

And the cultural universalism that welcomes refugees and immigrants has run into the reality that many Muslims do not accept the secularism and the progressive values of the West, even if only a minute fraction of them actively seek to harm those values. Thus it is not enough to repeat the shibboleths of the triumphal post-Cold War moment. Le Pen likes to say that the great struggle of our time is between "mondialisation" and "patriotisme." Liberalism must find a language, and a set of policies, to pry patriotism from the clutches of the nationalists and the xenophobes. A cosmopolitan identity, or even a European one, is too flimsy a garment for most people to wear. The real struggle of the future may be the effort to define an affirmative patriotism. French voters will join that struggle on Sunday.

US-China ties warm over currency, Syria

Foreign Policy, 06.04.2017



The United States and China struck what appeared to be an unusual bargain on April 12 as U.S. President Donald Trump said he would not label China a currency manipulator and voiced confidence Chinese President Xi Jinping will help him deal with North Korea's mounting threat.

Another result of the diplomatic wrangling: A surprising Chinese abstention on a U.N. resolution condemning a Syrian chemical weapons attack. China on April 13 said that military force could not resolve tension over North Korea, while an influential Chinese newspaper urged the North to halt its nuclear program in exchange for Chinese protection.

In a newspaper interview and a White House news conference, Trump hailed the rapport he developed with Xi during last week's Florida summit, which seems to have yielded an immediate easing of tensions related to the U.S.-Chinese trade imbalance and how to prevent Pyongyang from developing a nuclear missile capable of reaching the United States.

"I think he wants to help us with North Korea," Trump said of Xi, crediting China in the news conference with taking a "big step" by turning back boats of coal that North Korea sells to its northern neighbor. North Korea conducts some 90 percent of its trade with China.

And in one of the sharpest reverses of his presidency, Trump backed off from a campaign pledge by saying he would not declare China to be a currency manipulator, an action that could have led to higher tariffs on Chinese goods. The accusation had formed a basis of Trump's argument for lost American jobs, on the grounds that an undervaluing currency was boosting Chinese exports and leading to artificially low prices, all at U.S. manufacturers' expense.

"They're not currency manipulators," Trump told The Wall Street Journal earlier on April 12, saying the country hadn't been cheating on its currency for months. He said a U.S. declaration of Chinese manipulation could jeopardize talks with China on North Korea.

Asked specifically if his decision on currency was part of an agreement over North Korea, Trump responded: "We're going to see. We're going to see about that." With a U.S. aircraft carrier group, USS Carl Vinson, steaming to the Korean peninsula and tension rising, South Korea said it believed the United States would consult it before any pre-emptive strike against the North.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se told parliament in Seoul he believed Washington would consult Seoul if it was considering a pre-emptive strike. The United States has about 28,500 troops in South Korea. Fears have been growing that the reclusive North could soon conduct its sixth nuclear test or more missile launches in defiance of U.N. sanctions and stark warnings from the United States that a policy of patience was over.



China, North Korea's sole major ally and benefactor, which nevertheless opposes its weapons program, has called for talks leading to a peaceful resolution and the denuclearization of the peninsula.

"Military force cannot resolve the issue," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters in Beijing. "Amid challenge there is opportunity. Amid tensions we will also find a kind of opportunity to return to talks."

An influential state-backed Chinese newspaper said the best option for North Korea and its leader, Kim Jong Un, was to give up its nuclear program, and China would protect it if it did. "As soon as North Korea complies with China's declared advice and suspends nuclear activities ... China will actively work to protect the security of a denuclearized North Korean nation and regime," said an editorial in the Global Times, which is published by the Communist party's People's Daily.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe underscored fears about threats from North Korea, telling parliament in Tokyo that Pyongyang could have the capacity to deliver missiles equipped with sarin nerve gas.

"There is a possibility that North Korea is already capable of delivering (via missile) a warhead containing sarin," Abe told a parliamentary diplomacy and defense committee, referring to the poison nerve agent.



Announcements & Reports

Europe's Role in North Africa: Development, Investment and Migration

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2017/04/europes-role-in-north-africa-development-investment-and-migration/>

Maintaining Arctic Cooperation with Russia

Source : Rand
Weblink : http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1731.html

The unprecedented expansion of the global middle class

Source : Brookings
Weblink : <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-unprecedented-expansion-of-the-global-middle-class-2/>

Upcoming Events

Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union

Date : 25 April 2017
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 : 25 April 2017
Place : London - UK
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>

13th Asia Europe Economic Forum (AEEF)

Date : 26 April 2017
Place : Beijing - China
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/13th-asia-europe-economic-forum/>

Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?

Date : 27 April 2017
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 : 27 April 2017
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 : 27 April 2017
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 : 28 April 2017
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 April 2017
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>

Vision Europe Summit 2016

Date : 28 April 2017
Place : Lisbon - Portugal
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/vision-europe-summit-2016/>