

EU Minister: Global developments necessitate reinforced Turkey-EU ties

Hurriyet Daily News, 26.04.2017



Turkey's EU Minister Ömer Çelik has stated that developments that threaten global security necessitate a "reinforced relationship" between Ankara and Brussels.

His statement came a day after the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) re-opened monitoring process on Turkey, and it also touched on his visits to Brussels and Strasbourg in the coming weeks. Çelik is set to meet with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini, as well as Council of Europe head Thorbjorn Jagland.

His meetings will likely follow President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's talks with Juncker and European Council President Donald Tusk in late May. Despite problems between the two sides, Çelik stressed that global developments made reinforced Turkey-EU ties necessary, citing the tension in East Asia between the United States and North Korea as well as U.S. President Donald Trump's questioning of the role of NATO and support for Brexit.

"This is such a period in which we should strengthen Turkey-EU ties," Çelik said. In order to do so, both sides need to have a "sound discussion" on relations, he added, stressing the need for a high-level summit that would take place only after German elections in September.

"It's no longer possible to pursue our relationship through this rhetoric. We have to come to a conclusion on our relationship through either a summit or other mechanisms, because we are not an ordinary country in Europe. A careful and respectful language should be used on Turkey," Çelik said.

In the meantime, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, speaking to reporters in Uzbekistan, slammed the PACE's decision on Turkey and repeated that Ankara will have to review its cooperation with the Assembly.

President Erdoğan: Turkey eyes new ties with US under Trump leadership

Hurriyet Daily News, 28.04.2017



Turkey is eyeing new ties with the United States under the administration of President Trump, demanding a strong stance on the YPG and the extradition of U.S.-based Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen, President Erdoğan has said.

Erdoğan and Trump are expected to hold their first face-to-face meeting on May 16. “Our high-level talks with the Trump administration have been continuing since January 2017. I believe we will open a fresh page with Trump,” Erdoğan said, voicing the country’s disturbance over Washington’s cooperation with the PYD in Syria in its fight against the ISIL.

“The hesitant attitudes toward terrorist organizations need to be abandoned as soon as possible,” the president said. “Everyone needs to accept that a terrorist organization can’t be eliminated with another one,” Erdoğan said, adding that there could be no such thing as “a good terrorist organization.”

“We can’t achieve anything with the logic ‘this terrorist organization is on my side, so it’s good, but the other one is against me, so it’s bad.’ All terrorist organizations are bad. Thus, we need to continue our struggle against terrorist groups in joint solidarity. When we do that, the world will be safe from these gangs and killers,” he also said.

Saying that “remaining silent to the ethnic cleansing activities of the terrorist groups such as the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and YPG just because they fight against ISIL invites new crimes against humanity,” Erdoğan said.

“The PYD and the YPG are the miscarried children of the PKK terrorist organization. We very well know this and if there is someone who knows who is who in this region, it’s us. That’s why we should be asked questions. Our friends should find these things out from us. Otherwise, the wrong steps are taken based on the wrong information and the region will go into a major downfall. Let’s not forget that terrorist groups are like scorpions. It definitely will sting the hand that feeds it,” he said.

During his speech, Erdoğan also said “destroying ISIL is possible with steps other than legitimizing terror,” while criticizing the U.S. for acting with the PYD. “The U.S. acting with PYD in Syria is damaging the spirit of alliance and partnership,” Erdoğan said, adding that Turkey would never allow the establishment of a “terror corridor” in northern Syria.

“We will never allow the creation of a terror corridor along our southern border. As you know, there are some ignorant people who are attempting to establish a state in northern Syria. They say the ignorant are brave.



We will never allow the establishment of such a state in northern Syria,” Erdoğan said, noting that Ankara was supporting the protection of Syria’s territorial integrity. Erdoğan also stressed the need for cooperation on the issue of “foreign terrorist fighters.”

“If the necessary cooperation was established regarding foreign terrorist fighters, could the attacks in Brussels last year have been carried out? If a principled stance had been presented without making discriminations between terrorist organizations, would these herds of killers be able to get this strong? I’m sure that the double standards we witness in the issues that concern our security, future and human life hurt you just like they hurt me,” he said.

Claiming that Turkey had inflicted the biggest blow on ISIL with the Euphrates Shield Operation, Erdoğan noted that over 3,000 ISIL militants were “neutralized” in the area in which the operation was carried out.

“I see a benefit in deciphering the inaccurate news in the foreign press. By clearing up 2,500 square kilometers from the terrorists, we had allowed nearly 50,000 Syrians to return home. This operation, which we carried out by cooperating with the true owners of the region, was the biggest blow to ISIL. Now we are trying to make life return to normal in that area,” he added.

During his speech, Erdoğan reiterated his call for a safe zone in northern Syria. “Let’s declare the region in northern Syria a safe zone cleared from terror, declare it a no-fly zone at the same time and continue train-and-equip efforts here. Turkey is ready to do its part,” Erdoğan said, adding that foreign leaders had not done anything on the issue despite praising the idea in bilateral meetings.

“The support to terrorist groups continued. If this [aforementioned suggestion] was made then Syrians wouldn’t have left Syria. What we wanted was to construct buildings and by establishing educational, medical and social facilities, build a new city there, but we couldn’t do it,” he said.

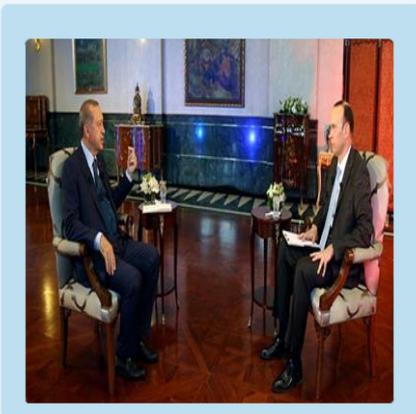
Erdoğan said “there is no other way for the terror swamp, which has become an education camp for ISIL, the YPG, al-Qaeda and the Shabiha, to be drained except for a safe zone.” Erdoğan also criticized the U.S. on the extradition of Gülen, who has been accused of leading the July 2016 coup attempt.

“It makes our citizens upset that Gülen is continuing its terrorist activities in Pennsylvania. This terrorist organization is active in 170 countries and he manages the activities in all those countries from the U.S. This villain that killed 249 people shouldn’t find a space to live in any civilized country. Extradite him to Turkey in order for him to be tried,” he said.

Presidential spokesperson İbrahim Kalın, meanwhile, said the issues of the PYD, YPG and Fethullahist Terror Organization (FETÖ) would be discussed during the Trump-Erdoğan meeting. “One expectation is to see some change regarding cooperation against ISIL. On the FETÖ issue, the U.S. administration should take very clear steps,” Kalın said, adding that Turkey respected the rule of law and the judicial process. When asked about Turkey’s recent air strikes on Sinjar in northern Iraq and the U.S. reaction to it, Kalın said the issue would be handled in depth during his Washington visit.

Turkey to engage in a new foreign policy bid by May

Reuters, 21.04.2017



Turkey will launch a foreign policy move through presidential visits to in an attempt to reshape the country's relationships with the international community after domestic political tension fractured Turkey's bonds with its traditional allies.

President Erdoğan's itinerary includes a visit to Washington D.C. for his meeting with President Trump and to Sochi for talks with President Putin. Erdoğan will visit Beijing, Brussels and New Delhi. Turkey is going on foreign drive in a bid to repair relationships with countries, such as the US, Germany and the Netherlands, while Ankara also wishes to discuss developments in Syria and the fight against the ISIL.

Erdoğan will seek to establish "a new framework" for the Turkish-American relationship in Washington in the wake of his contested win in the April 16 referendum, while also planning to meet with the European Union's two top institutional leaders, Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk, in Brussels to discuss Ankara-Brussels ties in detail.

Erdoğan's first stop on his tour will be India on April 30, when he will be accompanied by ministers responsible for economy and trade. Erdoğan will participate in Turkey-India Business Forum and will hold political talks with Indian leaders, particularly President Pranab Mukherjee. The agenda during the meeting is expected to be dominated by an improvement of bilateral economic and trade ties.

Erdoğan's second visit will be to Sochi on May 3 where he will meet President Vladimir Putin, although the two leaders recently met in Moscow in March. Erdoğan, who will discuss developments in Syria with Putin, will deliver the message that "the conflict in Syria can be resolved if Russia adopts a constructive position and a political transition process can begin."

The Erdoğan-Putin meeting will be important also for bilateral economic and energy ties. Despite the fact that the two countries launched a normalization process in ties, Russia continues to impose serious restrictions on the import of Turkish agricultural products.

Turkey recently deployed a high-level delegation to Russia to resolve the trade dispute that has affected \$450 million in agricultural trade from Turkey. The two leaders are also expected to discuss the potential that Moscow will ease visa conditions for Turkish business leaders.

The meeting between Trump and Erdoğan, deemed as historic by Ankara with regards to Turkish-American ties, is expected to take place in the second half of May. The oral invitation to Erdoğan was extended by Trump in a phone conversation, in which Trump reportedly told Erdoğan: "Let's meet face to face. Turkey is very important for us; we want to work with you."

Following consultations through diplomatic channels, the two sides agreed to hold a meeting in the second half of May. The issues to be discussed at the White House include the extradition of Fethullah Gülen and restrictions on his followers in the U.S., developments in Syria, Turkey's sensitivities over the prospective role for the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG), in the upcoming Raqqa operation, as well as the countries' bilateral economic relationship.

Turkey has already begun working on the dossiers ahead of the visit, while the main theme in Washington will be to create a new framework for bilateral ties. A NATO summit in Brussels on May 25 will also provide a good opportunity for Erdoğan to hold bilateral meetings with some key European leaders. Furthermore, talks are underway to arrange bilateral or trilateral meetings between Erdoğan and European Commission head Juncker and European Council President Tusk.

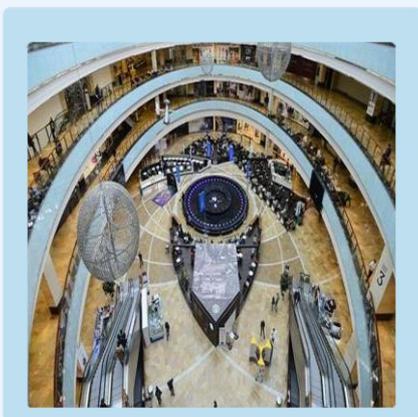
Erdoğan's message to Europe is expected to center on unopened accession chapters, visa liberalization, the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Gülenist movement's activities in Europe, according to presidential sources.

Turkish sources noted that Ankara had reacted positively to German Chancellor Angela Merkel's call for dialogue following the referendum, while stressing that further contacts with Europe would follow in this process.

The president will also visit China in May to attend the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on May 14 and 15 along with Putin and other regional leaders. Erdoğan will hold talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, as well as other participants, and is expected to sign a cooperation agreement on the revival of the ancient Silk Road through new railways and roads.

US: Turkish strikes on YPG in Syria put our soldiers at risk

Hurriyet Daily News, 28.04.2017



The U.S. State Department said it was “deeply concerned” over the Turkish air strikes on the (PG in Syria, adding that the raids were putting the U.S. soldiers on the field at risk.

“We’ve made very clear to the Turkish government at very high levels our deep concern about the actions that they took the other day,” said State Department Deputy Spokesperson Mark Toner. “Not only were they not fully coordinated – or not coordinated within the coalition, but they put, frankly, U.S. soldiers at risk who were operating in that area, but also resulted in the deaths of, for example, Iraqi Peshmerga, who were fighting on the ground,” Toner said.

“We’re going to continue to press the case with Turkey going forward that all of the forces fighting ISIS in that region need to focus on the goal of fighting ISIS,” he said, using another acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

“We understand Turkey’s concerns about YPG; we disagree, but we’re making very clear to them that they need to fully coordinate with us and other coalition members going forward.” New clashes erupted between the Turkish military and an the YPG, regarded as a terror group by Ankara due to its link to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), but seen by the U.S. as an ally in the fight against jihadists, reports said.

Mortar shells fired from an area in Syria controlled by the YPG hit an army command post in the Akçakale district of Turkey’s southern Şanlıurfa province, the Doğan and Anadolu news agencies said. The Turkish military said 25 that it killed 40 militants in northern Iraq and 30 others in northeastern Syria.

A Turkish General Staff statement said that security forces carried out counter-terrorism airstrikes around 2.00 a.m. on April 24. On April 26. Turkey offered condolences to Masoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) over the deaths of six Peshmerga troops during the Turkish air strike. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said it was a “source of sadness” that the Peshmerga had been killed as a result of a mistake.

Israeli attack on Syria military camp kills three

AFP, 23.04.2017



An Israeli attack on a Syrian training camp near the Golan Heights killed three members of a pro-government militia, an official from the forces said.

The Al-Fawwar camp in Syria’s southwestern Quneitra province is used by the NDF, which command some 90,000 fighters across Syria. The NDF official told AFP that two fighters were also wounded in the Israeli attack, but said it was unclear whether the damage was inflicted by an air strike or shelling. Another Syrian source inside the training camp told AFP. local time “security guards at the camp saw what looked like three fireballs coming towards the camp.”

“Then there were several consecutive blasts because of the explosion of ammunition warehouses” that firefighters worked hard to extinguish, the source said. The source also said that they were “Israeli rockets” but could not specify what kind of missiles may have been used. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said the attack had targeted a “weapons warehouse” in the camp. Israel’s army declined to comment yesterday on the attack.

On April 21, the Israeli army said it targeted positions inside Syria in retaliation for mortar fire that hit the northern part of the Golan Heights. At the time, Syria's official news agency SANA said Israel had struck a Syrian army position in the province of Quneitra on the Golan plateau, "causing damage."

The Syrian government labels rebel groups and jihadists fighting the regime as "terrorists" and accuses Israel of backing them. Israel seized 1,200 square kilometers of the Golan from Syria in the Six-Day War of 1967 and later annexed it in a move never recognized by the international community.

Around 510 square kilometers of the Golan are under Syrian control. The two countries are still technically at war, although the border remained largely quiet for decades until 2011, when the Syrian conflict broke out.

The Israeli side is hit sporadically by what are usually deemed to be stray rounds, and Israel has recently taken to opening fire in retaliation. Meanwhile, the Syrian army and allied forces advanced against rebels in western Syria near Hama city yesterday, building on recent strategic gains in the area, a military source and a monitoring group said.

Government forces captured the town of Halfaya and nearby villages, they said, taking back territory that rebels seized last year from forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad. "We gained control of Halfaya and several hills in the area," the Syrian military source said. "The army will of course continue its fight."

Boosted by Russian air strikes and Iranian-backed militias, the Syrian army has pushed into rebel areas north of Hama, expanding its control this week along the western highway that links Damascus and Aleppo. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the army began advancing into areas near Halfaya when rebels withdrew yesterday, following intense battles and air strikes.

Syria accuses Israel of Damascus strike

Hurriyet Daily News, 27.04.2017



Syria accused Israel of triggering a huge explosion near Damascus airport on April 27 by firing several missiles at a military position.

Israel has carried out multiple air strikes in Syria since the country's civil war erupted in 2011, most of which it has said targeted arms convoys or warehouses of its Lebanese arch-foe Hezbollah. Israeli Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz said it was consistent with his government's policy to prevent arms transfers to Hezbollah, but stopped short of confirming his country was behind any attack.



Syria's state news agency SANA said several Israeli missiles hit an area close to the airport causing material damage. "A military position southwest of Damascus International Airport was targeted at dawn today by an Israeli aggression using several missiles fired from occupied territory, sparking explosions in the area," SANA said, citing a military source.

In the terminology of the Syrian government, occupied territory can refer to Israel inside its internationally recognized borders. The source did not specify whether the military position belonged to the Syrian army or one of its allies. Earlier, Damascus ally Hezbollah said the blast was "probably" the result of an Israeli air strike.

The Lebanese militant group's al-Manar television said the raid hit a warehouse and fuel tanks, without specifying whether they were its own or belonged to the Syrian army or another of its allies. Al-Manar said preliminary reports suggested the blast caused only material damage and no casualties.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitoring group, said the warehouse was largely empty and "probably" belonged to Hezbollah. A resident of the Dawwar al-Baytara neighborhood in the southeast of the capital, who lives in a tower block that looks toward the airport area, said he had seen an immense fireball.

"Around 4 a.m., I heard an enormous explosion," the resident told AFP. "I ran to the balcony and looking towards the south, in the direction of the airport, I saw a huge fireball. There was a power cut and it was pitch black, and the fireball was clearly visible."

"We are acting to prevent the transfer of sophisticated weapons from Syria to Hezbollah in Lebanon by Iran," the Israeli intelligence minister told army radio. "When we receive serious information about the intention to transfer weapons to Hezbollah, we will act. This incident is totally consistent with this policy."

Israeli warplanes have hit the airport and other bases around the capital in the past, targeting what it said were weapons stockpiles destined for Hezbollah. The airport lies about 25 kilometers southeast of the city center.

It was hit by Israeli air strikes in December 2014, Syrian state media reported at the time. Israel does not usually confirm or deny each individual raid it carries out. But last month, it said it had carried out several strikes near the Syrian desert city of Palmyra, targeting what it said were "advanced weapons" belonging to Hezbollah. The strikes prompted Syria to launch ground to air missiles, one of which was intercepted over Israeli territory in the most serious flare-up between the two neighbors since the Syrian civil war began six years ago.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed those strikes and vowed there would more if necessary. On Jan. 13, Syria accused Israel of bombing Mazzeh airbase in the western suburbs of the capital. There were several strikes near the same base last year. Israel and Syria are still technically at war, though the armistice line had remained largely quiet for decades until 2011 when the Syrian conflict began. Israel and Hezbollah fought a 34-day war in 2006 which killed 1,200 people in Lebanon, mainly civilians, and 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers.

All for one: Emboldened EU united against UK over Brexit

Bloomberg, 27.04.2017



European Union leaders are set to declare that when it comes to Brexit, 27 of them will stand as one against the U.K. A Saturday summit in Brussels called solely to discuss Britain's departure from the bloc will serve as a stage for the governments the U.K. is leaving behind to talk up unity and warn British officials against sowing division in the hope of securing a better exit deal.

Emboldened by the electoral defeat of anti-European Union forces in Netherlands and the rise of Emmanuel Macron in France elections, the bloc is increasingly confident it can speak as one.

That would strengthen its negotiating hand as it seeks to preserve regional stability and ensure others aren't encouraged to follow the U.K. out of the door. "Unlike most statements by EU heads of state, this Saturday's on Brexit will not have to paper over significant cracks," Mujtaba Rahman, managing director at the Eurasia Group, said in a report to clients. "Member states are instead incredibly united."

U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May indicated on Thursday that she knows what she's up against when she said the rest of the EU will "line up to oppose us." She asked voters to back her in June's election so as to give her "the strongest possible hand."

An average 63 percent of EU citizens polled for the European Parliament said it is in the interests of their country for members to act jointly in the Brexit talks, according to a report released on Friday. Some 82 percent of Germans held that view that compared with 44 percent of Britons. Still, 49 percent of U.K. respondents described EU membership as a good thing, more than in nine other countries.

Failure to aggravate splits between EU countries would make it harder for May to obtain the easy divorce and new trade deal she wants. The remaining EU members are set to rubber-stamp negotiating guidelines, the draft of which demands the U.K. pay a financial settlement to leave and outlines an eventual trade deal less ambitious than the one May aspires to.

While British Brexit Secretary David Davis this week denied trying to "divide and rule" on the basis that EU unity lends itself to a swift settlement, there have been signs that the U.K. has been trying to find allies.

It sought and failed to have informal conversations with German Chancellor Angela Merkel's administration and gave higher status and more staff to ambassadors throughout central and eastern Europe.



Last month's warning by May that failure to find common ground could dilute "cooperation in the fight against crime and terrorism" was seen as another attempt to undermine the bloc's resolve, diplomats said.

EU officials are betting on more of the same with one of the region's diplomats saying governments are on "red alert" for efforts to pick off individual nations. "European unity will be tested," Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern said on Tuesday in Vienna. "It's clear as daylight that the U.K.'s strategy will be to try to divide Europe through bilateral negotiations with some countries."

One reason for it to do so is that the EU is rarely united, often only finding agreement on issues at the last minute after weeks of horse-trading and then on the basis of consensus rather than unanimity. Years of talks over how to deal with Greece's fiscal woes and repeated budget rounds demonstrate traditional Brussels brinkmanship.

What's different with Brexit is that it poses a threat to the common good of the 27 remaining EU nations. If the U.K. is allowed to leave on favorable terms then it risks fanning euroskeptic sentiment elsewhere in the bloc, threatening the stability and perhaps the existence of the post-war project.

"Our position is determined by the interests of the 27," European Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans told reporters on Thursday at a meeting of national ministers in Luxembourg. It was the first time since the U.K. joined the EU in 1973 that official EU ministerial talks have taken place without a British representative.

The sense that preparations for the negotiations have been smooth on the continent also underscores what the U.K. is up against. Wording in the draft guidelines has been tightened over the course of several rounds of revision since EU President Donald Tusk circulated an early outline last month.

France succeeded in getting separate language to ring-fence financial services from a future trade deal, while Poland and Hungary won backing for assurances that EU citizens in the U.K. would be able to obtain British residency after five years. The Netherlands and Austria were among a group of countries to ensure that the EU will push the U.K. to meet a commitment to make EU payments until the end of 2020 — nearly two years after Britain leaves.

In his invitation letter for Saturday's summit, Tusk said the bloc's leaders should agree that the U.K. must honor "all financial obligations." The EU president also stressed the importance of a "phased approach" to the negotiations, reiterating that future relations with Britain won't be discussed "until we have achieved sufficient progress on the main issues relating to the U.K.'s withdrawal."

In a further sign of how hard things might be for May, Germany's Merkel said on Thursday that the EU is entering into "very complex" negotiations with a strong sense of unity with the bloc putting its interests first. "You might think that these things are self-evident, but unfortunately I have to put it in such clear terms because I have the feeling that some in Britain still have illusions," Merkel said. She may soon have backing from Macron, assuming he wins the French presidency in the run-off against euroskeptic Marine Le Pen. Macron said in February that he would be "pretty tough" on Britain "because we have to preserve the rest of the European Union."

EU diplomats nevertheless acknowledged that internal divisions may surface over the course of the negotiations. There is already disagreement over what constitutes “sufficient progress” on Britain’s financial obligations and the rights of citizens that the EU’s draft negotiating guidelines say is needed before talks on a trade arrangement can start.

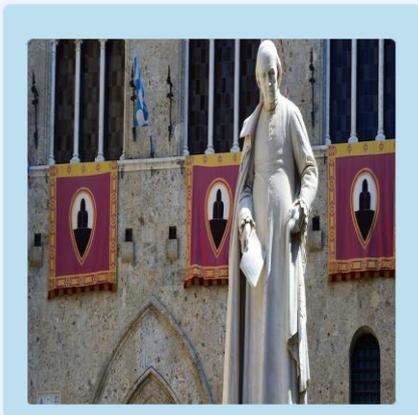
The prime ministers of the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland all said after talks that haggling over the bill shouldn’t postpone the trade talks for too long. “The sooner the better,” said Mark Rutte of the Netherlands, adding some issues shouldn’t be allowed to “hijack” others.

And with most EU countries bidding to take over from the U.K. the hosting of the European Medicines Agency or the European Banking Authority, the fight over the spoils of Brexit could ramp up tension. The EMA, which oversees the safety of drugs sold in the EU, would give a 1 billion-euro (\$1.1 billion) boost to the winning country’s economy, Austria’s Kern said on Thursday.

“There’s bound to be a crisis along the way -- this won’t all happen smoothly,” Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn said on Thursday. “We have to be careful and stay united and make sure we are not torn apart.”

Emmanuel Macron is everything America’s democrats are not

Foreign Policy, 25.04.2017



Whatever you think of France’s centrist establishment, you have to hand it to them: They took the threat of populism seriously. In fact, they created a totally fictitious party, and hitched their star to an unknown, telegenic 39-year-old whose defining biographical characteristic is that he married his high school French teacher.

The idea was to give some revolutionary sheen to a centrist platform, and, barring some unforeseen catastrophe in Round 2, it seems to have worked. Emmanuel Macron is well-positioned to become the next president of France, and perhaps even the next interim leader of the free world.

Macron’s success raises the question of whether center-left regimes are foundering under the weight of an unpopular platform or simply unpopular leaders. Although crucial blocs of voters in many countries undoubtedly favor retreating from global institutions like NATO and the European Union, it’s not clear whether such views actually command a majority in any country, perhaps not even in the United Kingdom, where multiple surveys indicate that most voters, faced with a weakening pound, wish Brexit had failed. In France, the doomed Socialist Party machine of President François Hollande and his former prime minister Manuel Valls, instead of clinging to vanity and suffering defeat at the hands of Marine Le Pen’s National Front brownshirts, concluded that fascism could be stopped in its tracks, but only through drastic action:



Dismantling the party system, committing suicide as a ruling class, and effectively endorsing a younger spokesman with a full head of hair. The New York Times recently glossed Macron as someone with the “profile” of an “insider” but the “policies” of an “outsider.” The truth is closer to the opposite. Macron successfully branded himself as an outsider while boosting an agenda that differs little from his predecessor.

Most impressively, Macron managed to co-opt the millenarian, apocalyptic rhetoric of his opponents on the extreme right and the extreme left. (It doesn’t hurt that he’s a man whose most fearsome opponent is a woman.) In his victory speech after the first round, Macron spoke of “changing the face” of France and smashing “the system that was incapable of dealing with the problems of our country for more than 30 years.”

He told his supporters that they were “an image of renewal,” and he identified the main “challenge” for France as “turning the page of our political life.” While Macron adopted a platform that is incrementalist — loosening labor market restrictions, increasing public spending, strengthening the EU — he adopted a register that is revolutionary.

English-language publications typically translate En Marche!, the name of Macron’s centrist coalition, as “forward,” but “forward” fails to convey the name’s explosive, eschatological ring. “En Marche” means not simply “forward” — a slogan that, à la benighted Republican presidential candidate Jeb Bush’s Jeb!, might suggest continuity with the old regime — but something closer to “turned on” or “on the march.”

It’s not that Macron has fooled voters into thinking he’s a bomb-thrower — they know perfectly well that he’s pushing a neoliberal agenda. Macron might not sound totally believable when he calls for smashing the system, but change-hungry voters still appreciate the feeling of being targeted. Authenticity isn’t the only thing rewarded in politics; effort is rewarded, too.

Exactly how successful Macron’s gambit will be won’t become clear until after the parliamentary elections in June, when En Marche! will have its hands full trying to field a slate of electable candidates for an imaginary party.

Macron’s most important objective, though, has already been accomplished. If polls are to be believed — and they are — fascism, Thatcherism, or Communard hologramism aren’t likely to come to the Elysée Palace.

It’s hard not to draw an unfavorable comparison between the center-left strategy in France and the center-left strategy in the United States, where leaders of the Democratic Party are mostly digging in, apparently unwilling to contemplate a hard reboot of personnel. Democratic Party regulars are fired up, but the party’s leaders, who remain unpopular, seem to be having difficulty capitalizing on that enthusiasm.

Trump, by all accounts, has had a miserable first 100 days in office, with innumerable controversies and no major accomplishments. Nevertheless, some analysts say his approval ratings, in the low 40s, are consistent with narrow re-election. The Republican Party, which controls the entire federal government and most levers of power in the states, is deeply unpopular, but the Democratic Party, which controls nothing, is even less popular, according to some polls.



The irony is that the Democratic Party's platform on issues like health care, education, and immigration is as popular — and as progressive — as it's ever been. There are many reasons why Democrats had a poor showing in 2016, but an important reason is that they were represented by septuagenarian leaders who had been wounded, over a period of decades, by billions of dollars of negative advertising. Fair or unfair, those ads hit their mark. Hillary Clinton, Harry Reid, and Nancy Pelosi remain historically unpopular figures.

Macron's success suggests an obvious move. When leaders are unpopular, get new ones. Macron's success suggests an obvious move. When leaders are unpopular, get new ones. For individuals, unpopularity can accumulate over time, but it isn't transitive.

After all, no Democratic politician in the United States (except possibly Anthony Weiner) is nearly as unpopular as Hollande. And yet Macron, whom Le Pen calls Hollande's "baby," and who served as Hollande's economy minister, is well on his way to replacing his old boss. Just because voters have come to hate Pelosi doesn't mean they'd hate Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota. Pelosi, in particular, has had a good run — her shepherding of Obamacare will go down as a historic accomplishment — but it's time for her to resign.

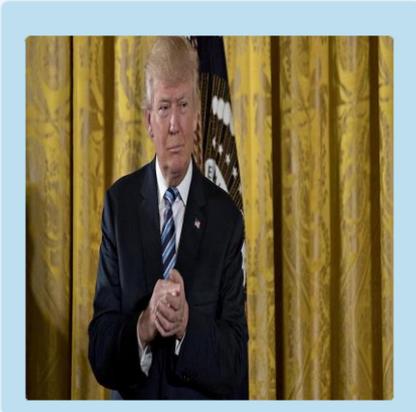
Center-left globalism, however you judge its record at improving living standards for people in the developed world, is a coherent ideology with a reasonably popular message. It has had some political superstars associated with it — Barack Obama, Tony Blair — and some political duds — Hollande, Al Gore, Gordon Brown. Ironically, given globalists' reputation for pragmatism, most globalist leaders who become unpopular are loath to take the pragmatic step of giving up office in the service of their ideology.

This is a mistake, particularly when confronting adversaries like the Kremlin or the GOP, which has focused its electoral strategies on the politics of personal destruction. Although America's Republicans have won the popular vote in a presidential contest only once in the past 25 years, their performance has been extraordinary when you consider that they've never pursued an agenda that commanded anywhere near majority support.

Democrats complain about dirty tricks and unfair attacks, but instead of constantly litigating the truth before the court of popular opinion, which turns out not to be a court at all, they'd do better to hand over the scalps of the leaders Republicans have maimed and cycle through to new people with thinner track records.

Trump says ‘major conflict’ with North Korea possible

Hurriyet Daily News, 28.04.2017



U.S. President Donald Trump said a “major, major conflict” with North Korea was possible over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, while China said the situation on the Korean peninsula could escalate or slip out of control.

Trump said he wanted to resolve the crisis peacefully, possibly through the use of new economic sanctions, although a military option was not off the table. “There is a chance that we could end up having a major, major conflict with North Korea,” Trump said. “We’d love to solve things diplomatically but it’s very difficult,” he said, describing North Korea as his biggest global challenge.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said there was a danger that the situation on the Korean peninsula could escalate or slip out of control, his ministry said. Wang made the comments in a meeting with a Russian diplomat at the United Nations, the ministry said in a statement.

China, the only major ally of North Korea, has been increasingly uncomfortable in recent months about its neighbor’s pursuit of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles in violation on U.N. resolutions. The United States has called on China to do more to rein in Pyongyang and Trump lavished praise on Chinese President Xi Jinping for his efforts, calling him “a good man.”

“I believe he is trying very hard. I know he would like to be able to do something. Perhaps it’s possible that he can’t. But I think he’d like to be able to do something,” Trump said. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on April 27 that China had asked North Korea not to conduct any more nuclear tests. Beijing had warned Pyongyang it would impose unilateral sanctions if it went ahead, he added.

“We were told by the Chinese that they informed the regime that if they did conduct further nuclear tests, China would be taking sanctions actions on their own,” Tillerson said on Fox News, without specifying what sanctions he was referring to. China banned imports of North Korean coal in February, cutting off its most important export, and Chinese media this month raised the possibility of restricting oil shipments to the North if it unleashed more provocations.

In a show of force, the United States is sending the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier group to waters off the Korean peninsula, where it will join the USS Michigan, a nuclear submarine that docked in South Korea. South Korea’s navy has said it will hold drills with the U.S. strike group. Admiral Harry Harris, the top U.S. commander in the Pacific, said the carrier was in the Philippine Sea, within two hours’ striking distance of North Korea if needs be. Harris also said a U.S. missile defense system being deployed in South Korea to ward off any North Korean attack would be operational in coming days.



China has been angered by the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), complaining that its radar can see deep into China and undermines its security. Trump said in the interview he wants South Korea to pay the cost of the THAAD, which he estimated at \$1 billion. South Korea, one of Washington's most crucial allies in the region, said the United States would have to bear the cost, pointing to possible friction ahead.

Trump has vowed to prevent North Korea from being able to hit the United States with a nuclear missile, a capability experts say Pyongyang could have some time after 2020. North Korea has conducted five nuclear tests and numerous missile tests, including one this month, a day before a summit between Trump and Xi in Florida.

North Korea, technically still at war with the South after their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce, not a treaty, regularly threatens to destroy the United States and says it will pursue its nuclear and missile programs to counter perceived U.S. aggression.



Announcements & Reports

► The Political Economy of Middle and North Africa Oil Exporters in Times of Global Decarbonization

Source : Bruegel

Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2017/04/the-political-economy-of-middle-east-and-north-africa-oil-exporters-in-times-of-global-decarbonisation/>

► *Maintaining Arctic Cooperation with Russia*

Source : Rand

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

► *Russia and the West After the Ukrainian Crises*

Source : Brookings

Weblink : https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1305.html

Upcoming Events

► *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/>