

Turkey's EU process a necessity of politics, not romanticism

Hurriyet Daily News, 01.06.2017



A process of reconciliation between Turkey and the European Union to end months of tension is a political – rather than a romantic – necessity, Turkey's EU minister has said, recalling that both parties are aware of the inextricable relationship between Ankara and Brussels.

“Why should we give up on the EU? The EU is a strategic goal for use but this relationship should be pursued in a fair and objective manner,” EU Minister Ömer Çelik told a group of reporters following some of the worst rows ever between the bloc and Turkey. “What we are doing is politics, not romanticism.

What we are concerned with is our national interests, so we'll look into how we can proceed,” the minister said. Officials from Turkey and the EU will meet at a political dialogue meeting on June 13 in Turkey in a bid to discuss the short-term road map of the relationship and to determine the areas in which the two parties will work.

Turkey and the EU will discuss setting a new political framework in ties by prioritizing areas of mutual concern. Turkey has also underlined that any process should include the accession process, which would necessitate the opening of negotiation chapters along with other issues such as the migrant deal, visa liberalization and a new customs union.

The decision to launch a new process was agreed at a meeting between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and two top EU officials in Brussels. Relations among Turkey, the EU and some prominent EU countries hit a nadir earlier in the spring due to arguments that occurred before a key referendum in Turkey on April 16.

“A common understanding behoves us to leave those discussions behind. Let's see what we can produce now. Why should we give up on the EU? We have continued our activities regarding the EU. And they are perfectly aware of why we are in this mood,” Çelik said.

Çelik accused the EU of failing to fulfill its commitments stemming from a migrant deal signed on March 18, 2016, as well as its promises to waive visa restrictions for Turkish nationals and deliver 3 billion euros of aid to Turkey for the resettling of refugees.

The EU is aware that it cannot cut its relationship with Turkey given that latter's geopolitical importance, Çelik said. EU accession also remains a strategic goal for Turkey, Çelik said. “This is what is being discussed [in the EU]: Turkey is an indisputable partner. We should listen to them and show progress [in ties]. And what we say is that the EU is a strategic partner but that the relationship should be based on fairness and objectivity.”

Turkey's top security board says US support to YPG 'does not benefit' an ally

Hurriyet Daily News, 24.05.2017



Turkey's top security board has repeated Ankara's stance on the United States' policy of providing weapons to the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria to fight jihadists, underlining that "support given to a terror organization" does not benefit an ally and friend.

"It has been emphasized that the implementation of a policy to support the PKK/PYD-YPG terrorist organization in the guise of the SDF, ignoring Turkey's expectations, does not benefit a friendship and alliance," stated the National Security Council (MGK) after a five-hour meeting late May 31.

The MGK convened under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and with the participation of the highest level military and civilian authorities. Turkey considers the YPG, the military wing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), as an offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is also recognized as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the European Union. The U.S. administration started to provide weapons to the YPG upon a presidential order signed by Donald Trump in mid-May at the expense of angering its closest ally, Turkey.

The MGK reviewed the state of ongoing fight against terror, recalling that recent attacks in Afghanistan, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Iraq, Sweden, Belgium and Pakistan "prove once again Turkey's rightfulness in urging efficient global cooperation against terror." It added that engaging in strategic cooperation with Turkey in counterterrorism would be to the advantage of the whole world.

The MGK said it discussed developments in Syria and Iraq both politically and militarily, expressing Turkey's determinacy in eliminating any threat that could be posed against its national security.

"It's been assessed that de-escalation zones that Turkey, Russia and Iran are trying to set together in Syria, with the purpose of reinforcing nationwide ceasefire and generating confidence building measures, would contribute to the regional peace in regards to political and humanitarian perspectives," it said.

The MGK made a comprehensive evaluation on the relationship with the EU after Erdoğan's meeting with top EU leaders in Brussels. The board expressed its support to the government on the eve of key meetings on June 13 by underlining that these ties "need to be improved within the framework of Turkey's full membership objective."

Arming YPG in Syria will harm all, Turkey tells US

Hurriyet Daily News, 31.05.2017



The U.S.'s arming of a Syrian Kurdish militia is "extremely dangerous" that could one day harm everyone, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said yesterday, urging Washington to reverse its "mistake."

"These weapons could be used against all of humanity, not just Turkey," Çavuşoğlu said, after the United States began providing arms to the People's Protection Units (YPG) in the battle against the jihadists of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The weapons include AK-47s and small-caliber machine guns, Pentagon spokesman Maj. Adrian Rankine-Galloway stated.

This marks the beginning of a campaign to better equip the YPG, which Ankara names "terrorist" due to its links with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). U.S. officials have said the weapons deliveries will include heavy machine guns, ammunition, 120mm mortars, armored vehicles and possibly TOW anti-tank missiles. The officials said the U.S. would not provide artillery or surface-to-air missiles.

"Such steps are extremely dangerous for Syria's unity and territorial integrity," he said. "If we are looking for stability in Syria, we should row back from those mistakes," he said during a press conference with his Slovenian counterpart, Karl Erjavec.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met U.S. President Donald Trump in Washington for the first time, during which the issue of U.S. support for the YPG was discussed. Less than a week before the meeting between Erdoğan and Trump, the latter approved arming fighters from the YPG.

"The president clearly expressed our position and concerns during his Washington visit. It was stressed how risky and dangerous the support given to the YPG was," Çavuşoğlu said. The Pentagon on May 30 said it had begun to transfer small arms and vehicles to the Kurdish elements of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-Syrian Arab alliance fighting ISIL and dominated by YPG fighters.

In announcing the decision, the Pentagon said the U.S. is "keenly aware" of Turkey's security concerns. Turkey says the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing, YPG are linked to the PKK and calls on its allies to cease cooperating with them.

The PKK is also outlawed by the U.S., but Washington believes the YPG is the most effective fighting force against ISIL in Syria, thus causing tensions between the NATO allies. The U.S.' weapons transfers began ahead of an upcoming offensive to recapture Raqqa, the last major bastion for ISIL in Syria.

Washington has sought to placate Ankara by saying the weapons will be handed out judiciously and stressing that it will monitor them to make sure they do not go into Turkey. The SDF has now advanced to within a few kilometers of Raqqa on several fronts, and this month captured the strategic town of Tabqa and the adjacent dam from the jihadists.

New road map will give fresh momentum to EU–Turkey ties

Hurriyet Daily News, 29.05.2017



President Erdoğan's visit to Brussels was positive because both Turkey and EU decided to maintain dialogue, said retired ambassador Ünal Çeviköz. The road map could give a new momentum to Ankara's rocky relations with Brussels, as the Turkish government may find it easier to fulfil the EU's expectations on standards in the near future in the absence of an election in the coming months, Çeviköz told.

How do you read the outcome of Erdoğan's visit to Brussels? The most important aspect of the visit was the trilateral meeting between Erdoğan, European Council President Tusk and European Commission President Juncker.

Erdoğan's meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel was also a highlight. Turkey-EU relations have not been going well for a long time and it was time to review the situation. I understand that they agreed to draw up a road map for another year.

This is encouraging. If it is a visionary and constructive road map it could help to give new momentum to Turkey-EU relations. That is exactly what we need. Visa-free travel in Europe for Turkish citizens, the Syrian refugee issue, and the EU's financial support on the refugee issue were probably the key elements of the road map.

Still, I don't think there will be any rapid developments because the EU has made it clear since 2013 that there were 72 criteria for the finalization of the agreement granting Turkish citizens' visa-free travel to Europe.

The problem is the law on combatting terrorism, and the Turkish government is still not at the point of coming to terms with the EU's understanding of the issue. EU leaders have made it clear that as long as we cannot make the necessary adaptation to the EU regulations, it will remain a block in front of visa-free travel to the EU. So unless there is a new development I don't think visa-free travel will be a near prospect.

What do you expect to happen in Ankara-Brussels relations in the year ahead?



I expect that Turkey will look for a very gradual and very lukewarm softening of some restrictions. Then probably the EU will look at the continuation of accession talks more favorably, after which the opening of accession chapters 23 and 24, related to the rule of law and fundamental rights, will become very crucial. If the EU can convince Cyprus, which currently blocks these chapters, that could lead to big momentum for Turkey and the EU.

Some would argue that Turkey–EU ties will be limited to transactional relations, cooperating on issues of common interest but disregarding human rights problems.

The Brussels visit was very important, firstly because both sides agreed to maintain dialogue. In the past we interrupted the dialogue and we saw the adverse effects of that. Second, Tusk underlined that he raised the issue of abiding by the universal values of human rights. This shows that the EU is not just going to look at relations with Turkey on a transactional basis; it will insist on the importance of fundamental human rights like freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

All this will be on their agenda and this is exactly how Europeans look at relations with Turkey. They want to see Turkey reach the same standards that Europeans are enjoying. They may come to the point where they look to open chapters 23 and 24.

So we should not expect progress on relations without Turkey taking necessary steps on improving democratic standards?

That is my reading. I think the state of emergency is a very important stumbling block in terms of democratization and I think the EU leaders have indirectly said its continuation is a problem. As long as it remains in place it will be an obstacle.

Looking at the president's track record, which so far has proved rather deaf to criticism on democratic issues, do you see any prospect of a change in his outlook?

If we had some kind of election coming up I wouldn't expect this to happen. Most of the difficulties we are facing are related to election calendars. The next election is scheduled for 2019, which means the government will not be under the pressure of election preparation, so it will perhaps be able to soften certain implementations. If this happens it may provide a new momentum.

But there are question marks about Erdoğan's intentions and whether he is still interested in the membership process. The first thing he mentioned after the referendum was the reintroduction of death penalty.

The references to capital punishment were political maneuvering. I have not seen Erdoğan or any other government leader taking the initiative to reintroduce capital punishment to the criminal code.

I don't think there is a serious consideration of reinstating capital punishment. It is against the universal values that the EU defends. If there is some kind of consideration to bring it back, it would be entirely against Turkey's path toward EU membership. Brussels has made it clear that it is a red line, and if it is reinstated relations will break. If that happens Turkey will find itself in a different league. Its Western vocation will come to an end it will be very difficult to reenergize that kind of a path. I think the Turkish leadership is aware of this difficulty.



But some doubt whether the president values the importance of the EU and wishes Turkey to remain anchored to the EU.

That is a very serious doubt and similar concerns are present in the Turkish public opinion as well. I think we have come to this point for political reasons. It has become an instrument for domestic purposes and the reason why we have been discussing it for the last few years is because we have been on a permanent cycle of elections, one after another.

Now the country's leadership will have a final consideration on where Turkey's main interests lie. The leadership will come to terms with the overall tendencies Ankara has pursued since World War II. I think Erdoğan is very aware that Turkey's future lies in maintaining relations with the EU. The country's economic relations oblige Turkey to follow that path. The EU remains our most important economic partner.

Some say Turkey may opt for transactional relations, telling Europeans to get on with business as usual while keeping democratic issues out of sight.

That is something EU public opinion will find difficult to accept.

Erdoğan also recently attended the NATO summit. Some observers say there is a widening gap between Turkey and its allies on regional issues.

On a case-by-case approach we can see there is a difference of opinion as far as Syria is concerned. Erdoğan has admitted that it is understood the Americans will conduct the Raqqa operation with the help of the Syrian Kurdish YPG, but that in the case of Turkey's national interests the rules of engagement will apply. But in NATO's overall mission on global issues Turkey is not in a very different position compared to other allies.

Let's get back to the meeting with Merkel.

We probably do not understand the real essence for the German insistence on the visit of their MPs to the Incirlik air base. The approach of Germany is legitimate, stemming from the requirement of the German Parliament. The parliament has the prerogative to monitor the movements of the country's soldiers and military experts. We in Turkey are not looking at it from a legalistic point of view and we fail to understand how important it is as far as the German constitution is concerned. We look at it from the political point of view, which is why we are not on the same page as Germany on this issue. Turkey has to make the distinction between its commitments to a military political organization as a member of NATO and bilateral relations with individual members of NATO.

Turkey accuses Germany of providing a safe haven for the [outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party] PKK and members of the Gülen movement. It seems that Turkey is trying to use leverage over Germany by blocking the visit to the Incirlik air base.

Turkey's complaints are also legitimate. Turkey has every right to complain that it has a perception that Germany is supporting PKK activities. This has to be dealt with on a bilateral front. But this problem should not be reflected in a multilateral organization. That is the mistake Turkey is making. I find Ankara's reaction in terms of Incirlik disproportionate.

US assures Turkey over arming YPG in ISIL fight

AFP, 02.06.2017



The U.S. military offered assurances to Turkey on June 1 over supplying arms to the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), after Ankara called the move "extremely dangerous."

"We are being transparent with Turkey on the details on what we are providing," said Baghdad-based Pentagon spokesman Colonel Ryan Dillon. "We are maintaining full accountability of the weapons we are providing the SDF," he said, referring to the SDF, a Kurdish-Syrian Arab alliance now moving in on ISIL's Syria stronghold of Raqqa. The SDF includes militants from the YPG, which is linked to the outlawed PKK.

Turkey says the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing, the YPG, are linked to the PKK and calls on its allies to cease cooperating with them. The PKK is also outlawed by the U.S., but Washington believes the YPG is the most effective fighting force against ISIL in Syria, thus causing tensions between the NATO allies.

In May, U.S. President Donald Trump approved arming the YPG to support the assault on Raqqa. Turkey said arming the YPG was an "extremely dangerous" move and urged Washington to reverse its "mistake."

The arms going to the SDF could include anti-armor weapons like rocket-propelled grenades or TOW missiles, in addition to vehicles, AK-47s and small-caliber machine guns. Dillon said any arms provided will be recorded by serial number. "We will maintain that in our database, and we will share that information with allies to the north that are concerned about the weapons we are providing," he said.

Russia says targeting ISIL leaving Syria's Raqqa

AFP, 01.06.2017



Russian warplanes have launched a series of strikes against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fleeing their Syrian stronghold Raqqa, Moscow said yesterday, as U.S.-backed forces edge closer to the city.

The defense ministry in Moscow said Russian aviation bombed ISIL convoys leaving their de-facto capital to the south in the direction of the ancient city of Palmyra and overnight from May 29 to May 30. The second strike destroyed dozens of cars and pickup trucks and killed scores of ISIL fighters, the ministry claimed in a statement.

“Russian commanders in Syria have warned that any attempt by ISIL fighters to leave Raqqa through the open corridor towards Palmyra will be decisively intercepted,” the ministry said. The latest announcement comes a day after Moscow said it fired four cruise missiles from a submarine and warship in the Mediterranean Sea at ISIL fighters who had moved close to Palmyra from Raqqa.

A U.S.-backed alliance of the Syrian Democratic Forces, dominated by the the People’s Protection Units (YPG) which Turkey sees as terrorist for its links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, is closing in on Raqqa from the north, west and east, but has not yet battled its way to areas south of the city.

Russia has previously suggested that Kurdish forces have wilfully allowed ISIL to leave the city in the direction of territory controlled by the Syrian government. Russia has been flying a bombing campaign in Syria since 2015 in support of President Bashar al-Assad, while the US has been leading a coalition mainly targeting ISIL. About 10,000 civilians have fled to a camp just north of Raqqa with hundreds more arriving each day as the battle for the city nears, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said yesterday.

Brexit: Five signs that leaving the EU is starting to hurt the UK economy

Independent, 02.06.2017



Canada this week became the last of the world's major advanced economies to report quarterly economic growth figures, confirming that the UK is indeed the worst-performing of its G7 peers so far this year.

The UK economy expanded by 0.2 per cent in the first three months of 2017, a sharp slowdown from just under a year ago, when it was outpacing Germany, Japan and the US. Here's a roundup of the other facts and figures indicating that Brexit is starting to bite. According to the latest available figures, inflation jumped unexpectedly to 2.7 per cent in April, which marked its highest level since September 2013.

The rise was largely due to a slump in the pound since last June's Brexit vote starting to bite. A weaker currency means that prices have to be raised to compensate. The pound has fallen around 13 per cent against the dollar since the referendum.

In April, the Consumer Price Index was up from an annual growth rate of 2.3 per cent in March and higher than the 2.6 per cent expansion City of London analysts had pencilled in. Core inflation, which strips out more volatile energy and food prices, jumped to 2.4 per cent, up from 1.8 per cent previously. That was the biggest annual increase since March 2013.

Nominal total average wages grew at an annual rate of 2.4 per cent in the three months to March according to the Office for National Statistic data published in May. Taking the above mentioned inflation figure into account, this means that real wages are falling and are now likely to be negative in 2017 for the first time since 2014.

"The fact that wage growth is not keeping up with price inflation does not bode well for consumer spending - which has been a key factor contributing to UK economic growth in recent years," Andrew Sentance, senior economic adviser at PwC, said back in May.

A shortage of EU migrant labour is starting to materialise in sectors ranging from nursing, to cleaning, to IT and accountancy. The latest Markit/REC Report on Jobs, based on a comprehensive survey of recruiters, showed that the availability of permanent and temporary candidates fell at the fastest pace in 16 months in April.

Vacancies continued to rise "markedly" and recruiters flagged a shortage of suitable applicants for more than 60 different roles. According to the survey of 400 recruitment and employment consultancies 38 per cent reported lower permanent candidate numbers available in the month against 8 per cent who saw an increase. All regions saw drops in candidate availability. The most rapid was in the South of England.

Data from Nationwide showed this week that house prices fell 0.2 per cent in May, following a 0.4 per cent drop in April. A Reuters poll of economists had predicted a drop of 0.1 per cent. Nationwide said that the weak pound could be to blame for falling house prices.

Finally, also this week, data from the Bank of England showed that mortgage lending grew by £2.7bn in April, which was the lowest since April 2016. Lenders approved 64,645 home loans in April, the lowest monthly figure since September, and well below average forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists.

Trump to pull out of Paris Climate Agreement

Foreign Policy, 30.05.2017



What will the United States potentially have in common soon with war-torn Syria and Nicaragua? It won't be part of the Paris Climate Agreement.

One hundred and ninety-five nations have signed the pact, meant to cope with climate change. But according to multiple reports, U.S. President Donald Trump is poised to follow through on his campaign promise to leave the landmark deal. On Wednesday, as reports of a potential U.S. exit from the agreement emerged, Trump took to Twitter to assure the public that a decision on whether to leave the deal, struck by President Barack Obama in 2015, was forthcoming.

He gave no indication of how he would proceed, other than his action would "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" Trump's statement gives his some wiggle room on whether he would actually leave. On Tuesday, he met with Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt, who wants the U.S. out of the accord.

He is set to meet on Wednesday with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, the former Exxon head, who is for remaining in the agreement. The president's daughter and advisor, Ivanka Trump, has also urged her father not to withdraw. The White House did not respond to a request for comment on the reports.

In the past, Trump has backed off seemingly imminent decisions to follow through on campaign promises. After he took office, he appeared poised to leave NAFTA, the free trade agreement between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, but didn't.

The United States remains in the trade deal today, although Trump has vowed to renegotiate it to win more favorable terms for American businesses. Trump, who promised to bring long-gone employment back to coal country, made leaving the Paris deal a cornerstone of his campaign.



He said the agreement hindered U.S. job growth and put the United States at the mercy of other countries even though the accord lacks an enforcement mechanism. The Obama administration pledged by 2025 to lower emissions by 26 to 28 percent below their 2005 levels.

As reports of a U.S. withdrawal circulated Wednesday morning, both the European Union and China reaffirmed their commitment to the deal. An EU official told the Associated Press that both sides planned to “spell out” how they plan to meet their commitments to the pact in Brussels on Friday.

But without the participation of the United States, the world’s largest economy and second-largest greenhouse gas producer, the deal loses much of its heft, said May Boeve, executive director of 350.org, an organization that backs action to combat climate change. “By exiting, the administration has isolated the United States from the rest of the world and defamed the U.S position as global leader on climate action and much more,” Boeve said in a statement Wednesday.

Heather Coleman, climate and energy director at Oxfam America, said Trump now “stands on the brink of declaring moral bankruptcy, leaving children and grandchildren- including his own- with a terrible mess to clean up.” It’s still unclear how Trump would legally exit the agreement. Reports indicate that Trump’s announcement could have “caveats in the language” that leave open the possibility that his decision isn’t set in stone.

The accord also has a lengthy waiting period for any party to exit the pact. Signatories cannot leave for three years. In other words, America’s exit would bleed into the next presidential election in 2020. Some conservatives contend a quicker way to ditch the Paris agreement is to exit the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which provides the broader international framework.

Gernot Wagner, an economist at Harvard University, said it was disappointing but not surprising that Trump wants to leave the deal. However, given the head of the EPA, the agency charged with protecting the environment, wants out of the accord, it might be better off without U.S. involvement, he said. “It might be better to let the rest of the world move ahead with sensible action,” Wagner said. “That is bad for the U.S., but unfortunately, that’s the world we live in.”

Why abandoning Paris is a disaster for America

Foreign Policy, 01.06.2017



Ever the showman, President Donald Trump tweeted Wednesday about his soon-to-be-announced decision on whether or not to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement with the air of a 1950s Las Vegas emcee building up his audience's anticipation for an upcoming act.

But the decision to remove the United States from the hard-fought, international agreement is no sideshow. This is about what's in the best interests of American prosperity and security. As promised, Trump stepped to the podium in the Rose Garden on Thursday afternoon, announcing that the United States would leave the Paris accord.

The decision will have serious, irreversible repercussions for the United States and the world. The president's justifications for leaving the agreement are also just plain wrong. First, contrary to the president's assertions, America's hands are not tied and its sovereignty is not compromised by the Paris climate pact.

The Paris agreement is an accord, not a treaty, which means it's voluntary. The genius (and reality) of the Paris agreement is that it requires no particular policies at all — nor are the emissions targets that countries committed to legally binding. Trump admitted as much in the Rose Garden, referring to the accord's "nonbinding" nature.

If the president genuinely thinks America's targets are too onerous, he can simply adjust them (although we believe it would be shortsighted for the administration to do so). There is no need to exit the Paris accord in search of a "better deal." Given the voluntary nature of the agreement, pulling out of the Paris deal in a fit of pique is an empty gesture, unless that gesture is meant to be a slap in the face to every single U.S. ally and partner in the world.

The second big lie is that the Paris agreement will be a job killer. In fact, it will help the United States capture more 21st-century jobs. That is why dozens of U.S. corporate leaders, including many on the president's own advisory council, urged him not to quit the agreement.

As a letter sent to the White House by ExxonMobil put it, the agreement represents an "effective framework for addressing the risk of climate change," and the United States is "well positioned to compete" under the terms of the deal.

Action on climate and economic growth go hand in hand, and are mutually reinforcing. That is why twice as much money was invested worldwide in renewables last year as in fossil fuels, and why China is pouring in billions to try to win this market of the future.



A bipartisan group of retired admirals and generals on the CNA Military Advisory Board is about to release a report that will also spell out the importance of competitiveness in advanced energy technologies — not just to the economy, but also to the country's standing in the world. Pulling out of climate will result in a loss of U.S. jobs and knock the United States off its perch as a global leader in innovation in a quickly changing global economic climate.

The rationale for ditching America's commitment to the Paris accord just doesn't hold up. Moreover, Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement comes with several serious and lasting consequences for the United States and the world:

The Trump administration is hastening catastrophic effects of climate change. Scientists and economists now state with confidence that the failure to act to arrest and mitigate global climate change will have devastating global consequences, including for young Americans alive today and for their children and grandchildren. Donald Trump himself may well live to see more climate-related catastrophes hit the homeland. His children and grandchildren certainly will.

Americans all over this country are already seeing the changes — storms are more severe, big floods come more often, and in the most extreme case, Arctic waters are melting and opening up sea lanes for the first time in recorded history.

Trump saw the damage from Hurricane Sandy firsthand, a preview of what climate change has in store for his children and grandchildren. Scientists and economists now state with confidence that the failure to act now to arrest and mitigate global climate change will have devastating global consequences,

Heading off the worst effects of climate change requires global action: Action by one country alone, no matter how powerful, cannot address the threat. But our country, one of the world's two largest carbon emitters, does have significant power to improve not just our own climate, but the world's — and Trump's decision takes us in the wrong direction.

That's especially tragic in light of the signature achievement of the Paris Agreement, which was to get every country on board; now China and India have made the same commitments the United States and other highly developed countries have. It binds us all together through a political agreement — but the strength of that agreement depends on all of us meeting our nationally determined responsibilities.

Put simply, the U.S. decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement will have impacts on the global climate that a future U.S. administration will not be able to undo. It will undermine the most significant and comprehensive coordinating mechanism for global action to combat climate change that we have.

It will weaken an existing asset to defend present and future generations of Americans against a significant threat; it will undermine our security. Indeed, leading military experts, including Secretary of Defense James Mattis, have warned that the impact of climate change will lead to more refugee flows, more famine, more conflict, and more terrorism. As Mattis said, "Climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today."



By withdrawing from this agreement, Trump would be ignoring an issue his own secretary of defense has said is a national security threat. Trump is abdicating U.S. leadership and inviting China to fill the void. During his Rose Garden address, the president asserted that the Paris agreement disproportionately benefits American competitors, such as China. Yet pulling out of the accord redounds to Beijing's benefit even more.

The Paris agreement was forged in part on the backbone of a preliminary understanding between the United States and China—the two largest carbon-emitting nations. In recent days, as Trump dithered about whether or not to stay in, the Chinese quickly seized the opportunity to claim the mantle of global leadership and have made clear that they will stay in, even as the United States pulls out.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is riding the wake of Trump's disastrous visit to Europe, where China and the European Union are expected to release a joint statement on Friday reaffirming their commitment to combatting climate change.

This follows Xi Jinping's defense of globalization and the importance of countries' looking beyond their own national interests at Davos earlier this year. Beijing will win an Olympics-sized soft-power boost by staying in while the Washington reneges.

Ceding U.S. leadership to the Chinese on this issue is likely to have political and economic costs. China, like Russia, sees value in any division between the United States and Europe — as a rising power it would rather negotiate with us separately rather than collectively. Europeans grateful to China for its continued partnership on climate will be less concerned to take account of U.S. interests with respect to, say, China's harmful industrial policy, human rights violations, or economic and military coercion expansionism in Asia.

European deals with China for the production of infrastructure and equipment related to renewable energy will surely follow. Pulling out of Paris will weaken our geopolitical standing – and complicate our efforts to work with our partners and allies to manage a rising China. Other nations that see themselves as bearing the brunt of climate change, including those of strategic importance to the United States — such as Vietnam, the Philippines, or much of Africa — will now see China as part of the solution to their problem.

Pulling out of Paris will likely result in creating jobs in China that could have been created here in the United States. It will give Chinese and other countries' companies a leg up in the growing and competitive green economy, putting U.S. companies at a serious disadvantage. The industry and the jobs of the future are in renewables — why would we cede any of that ground to Chinese, Indian, and European companies?

The United States will be relegated from a global leader, economically and otherwise, to a member of a lonely camp of pariah countries that haven't signed this global pact, together with only Syria and Nicaragua. America First? Hardly.

Withdrawing from Paris will damage U.S. standing in the world. Pulling out of Paris will call into question the word of the United States and weaken our ability to call on other countries to work with us on other global threats, such as global terrorism and global pandemics.



International agreements are not irrevocable; indeed this one, which the United States had a heavy hand in creating, was crafted carefully as a series of nationally determined, voluntary commitments precisely in order to gain worldwide support, and with the understanding that countries can adjust their commitments as needed. Walking away from that agreement sends a clear — and foolhardy — message to all other countries around the world: Don't trust the United States.

And why should they, if we so evidently signal that U.S. foreign policy is utterly politicized, and that agreements signed with one administration will not be honored by the next. It is firmly in the U.S. interest to have others' trust — and for us to be able to demand in return — the durability of agreements, even when governments change.

As a chief architect and moral leader of the post-World War II order, our own behavior with respect to agreements and international law sets the example. If the most powerful country in the world has suddenly decided that signing and living up to an agreement no longer matters, why should it matter to other states?

Why should Russia, for example, fear any sanction for invading the sovereign territory of another country, or North Korea fear any reaction to flouting U.N. Security Council resolutions? Why would other countries look to the United States to lead — or choose willingly to follow our lead — when we come asking for commitments, to counter the Islamic State or to address the next global pandemic?

In the wake of the president's disastrous first foreign trip, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and Director for the National Economic Council Gary Cohn were dispatched to attempt to reframe the trip on the Wall Street Journal op-ed page. There they gave perhaps the clearest and most alarming explanation of what America First means as a foreign policy and how it applies to the Paris Agreement. A key passage reads:

The president embarked on his first foreign trip with a clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a "global community" but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors, and businesses compete for advantage. We bring to this forum unmatched military, political, economic, cultural, and moral strength. Rather than deny this elemental nature of international affairs, we embrace it.

McMaster and Cohn are wrong. To be sure, the world is a competitive arena that has at times throughout history turned into bloody conflict and ruin. That is precisely the reason the United States has always looked for alliances and partnerships grounded not only in common interests, but common values and commitments.

It is also why wise presidents have long recognized that even as the most powerful nation on Earth — and in many cases precisely because of our global reach — the United States has an interest in a rules-based system. That system protects our citizens living overseas, our businesses operating overseas, and our military operations around the world. We threaten the underpinnings of that system at our peril.

Pulling out of Paris means Republicans own climate catastrophes. Just as President Barack Obama bequeathed to the Trump/Paul Ryan/Mitch McConnell team a workable framework for ensuring health care coverage, President Trump inherited a workable framework for global climate action.



The Republicans have chosen to pour sand in the gas tank of Obamacare, using the levers of government to attempt to make the Affordable Care Act fail even as they themselves fail to deliver a real alternative. Polls show that Americans — even Republicans — understand that the GOP now owns health care as an issue.

They will similarly own whatever disasters befall the United States if they do nothing to be part of the solution. They are ignoring the scientific evidence and turning their backs on the best chance to address this global challenge.

In fact, the majority of the population of every state in the United States supports staying in this agreement. The president and his Republican allies are flouting the will of the American people as our country walks away.

This week, there was news that this year's peach crop in South Carolina and Georgia was ruined by the extreme temperature swings — unseasonably hot in late winter, and a cold snap in late spring.

As extreme weather events like this and other phenomena associated with climate change accelerate, when we confront our next Katrina or Sandy, people will remember that it was Trump and the Republicans who did nothing. Make that worse than nothing: They lost ground and put their party ahead of the country.

Trump's pulling out of Paris means that the rest of us are called upon to do more — and we will. Even as the White House abandons the pact, there are plenty of ways for Americans to advance its goals. Many state and local governments are already tackling energy efficiency and emissions reductions.

California, the sixth-largest economy in the world, will not abandon its emission standards. And many U.S. cities are a locus of both great innovation and high-impact investments. That is why Mayor Bill de Blasio announced this week that he will sign an executive order for New York City to uphold climate commitments even if the United States pulls out.

Major corporations across this country have recognized the opportunities in clean energy and energy storage, and see the risks of inaction to their long-term profitability. ExxonMobil's shareholders even voted this week in support of more open and detailed analysis of the threats posed by climate change to the oil business.

Entrepreneurs, investors, and researchers will continue to press forward with the next generation of innovations that can reduce carbon emissions. And we can all continue to pressure our political leaders to take serious action to confront this threat. If Trump ditches Paris, there's no time for despair — it's a time for action.

There are many reasons why pulling out of Paris is a bad idea. (In addition to those above, there's the fact that, like most divorces, this is a yearslong legal process that requires more than a tweet or a speech.) Trump can bluster that he's putting America first, but climate change is real and will become far more dire in the coming years. The need for action to address it will remain urgent. The rest of the world won't be standing still and neither should we if we want to advance American security and prosperity.



Announcements & Reports

Central Asia at 25

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2017/05/central-asia-at-25/>

What Factors Cause Individuals to Reject Violent Extremism in Yemen?

Source : Rand
Weblink : https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1727.html

Actualising East: India in a Multipolar Asia

Source : Brookings
Weblink : <https://www.brookings.edu/research/actualising-east-india-in-a-multipolar-asia/>

Upcoming Events

13th Asia Europe Economic Forum (AEEF)

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

Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?

Date : 27 June 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 June 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 June 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 June 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 June 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 June 2017
Place : Lisbon - Portugal
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/vision-europe-summit-2016/>