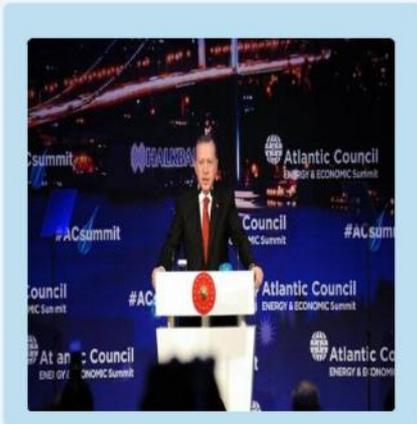


Muslims ‘must unite, act against terrorism’

Hurriyet Daily News, 19.11.2015



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has called for unity of Muslim leaders to fight extremism after the recent Paris terrorist attacks, warning that otherwise jihadists will commit further atrocities.

“We are at a crossroads in the fight against terrorism and on the issue of the refugee crisis after the terror attacks in Paris,” Erdoğan told a meeting of the Atlantic Council Energy & Economic Summit in Istanbul, referring to the Paris attacks on Nov. 13 that were claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and killed 129 people. “I strongly condemn the terrorists, who believe in the same religion as me.

I am calling on all leaders of Muslim countries to take a united position. In the same manner, I also call on all religious leaders to unite in this issue,” he added. “If not, those who knocked on our door in Ankara will knock on your door elsewhere, as they did in Paris. Did it end with Paris? No, it may knock on the door somewhere else,” Erdoğan said, calling for states to cooperate more deeply in the fight against terror.

The Turkish president also lashed out at any notion that “all Muslims are terrorists,” saying “bad people can be Muslims, as well as Christians and Jews.” “We cannot assign negative attributes exclusively to any religion. These bad people could be Muslims, Christians or Jews. Those who demonize Islam by looking at Daesh are making a big mistake. Daesh has nothing to do with Islam,” Erdoğan said, using an Arabic acronym for ISIL.

“Terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and Boko Haram, which abuse Islam, are in fact harming and killing Muslims more than anyone else. These organizations have no relation to Islam. I believe we took a step to preventing these evil sources from spreading through the attitude that we agreed on with Muslim-populated countries at the G-20 Summit,” he also added.

Erdoğan also accused Syrian President Bashar al-Assad of supporting ISIL and buying oil from the group. “All terror organizations in the region are today serving the al-Assad regime directly or indirectly. ISIL is supported by al-Assad. Al-Assad buys oil from Daesh and provides it with money. One must be blind not to see this; this is clearly apparent,” he said.

Erdoğan added that Turkey has been “left alone” in its struggle with the Syrian refugee crisis since the war across the border broke out. “We have carried the economic and social burden of around 2.5 million refugees from Syria and Iraq alone over the past five years,” he said.

EU, Turkey intensify talks over migration plan

Hurriyet Daily News, 20.11.2015



Diplomatic shuttling between Ankara and Brussels has accelerated greatly as part of joint efforts to secure a solution to the growing refugee crisis amid expectations that an agreement will be finalized at a prospective Turkey-EU summit.

Frans Timmermans, the first vice president of the European Commission, was in Turkey to meet Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu as part of a continuation of last week's intense negotiations over the refugee action plan. The two men and their experts met in Istanbul in an unannounced meeting.

The meetings came just three days after the refugee issue was discussed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and European Council President Donald Tusk.

EU officials have cited progress on talks but there are still important disagreements on how to finalize the framework of the agreement between Turkey and the EU. Leaders of the bloc have expressed their willing to hold the special summit with Turkey on Nov. 29 in order to finalize an accord to curb refugees flowing from the Middle East to Europe.

"There are promises, but still no certainty on these issues. It's meaningless to gather unless they make these issues clear," a senior Turkish official told the Hürriyet Daily News, stressing that Ankara was waiting for the EU to take action on several issues.

The first of these issues is the opening of accession Chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy. EU officials informed Ankara that an intergovernmental conference would be convened in December for the opening of the chapter, without providing an exact date. However, Turkish officials stressed the need to make this call an official one and announce an exact date for the conference.

In addition to this, Turkey has also expressed its expectations that more chapters will be reopened by the EU to re-energize talks. Turkey's list includes five more chapters, including 23 and 24, which cover justice and fundamental rights, as well as security, respectively. But EU officials have hesitated to give a concrete word to Turkey because this would require the anonymous approval of all 28 members, including Greek Cyprus, which has vetoed a number of these chapters. Another pressing issue is the financial assistance to be provided to Turkey. EU offered Ankara 3 billion euros to help Turkey accommodate the more than 2 million Syrians it is hosting.

Of that, 500 million euros would come from the EU budget and the rest from the 28 member states according to their national incomes. Ankara wants to see a clarification of the EU grant before holding the summit.

Third, Turkey has said it wants to be invited to the EU's council meetings held every six months. Turkey has long pressed the EU for permanent invitations to attend EU Council meetings to increase political dialogue. The EU's first proposal was to hold the summit on Nov. 22 on the migration crisis, but Ankara preferred Nov. 29, one day after a planned vote of confidence for the new Turkish government, the official said.

The EU leaders planned to invite President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for the summit in Brussels, but the issue of who will represent Turkey is still unclear, since the execution of the plan will be carried out by the government, according to EU sources. As such, the invitation could go to either Erdoğan's palace or the prime minister's office.

In the meantime, officials said Sinirlioğlu delegated Deputy Foreign Minister Naci Koru to represent Turkey at the U.N.'s meeting on migration on Nov. 20 even though the foreign minister was originally scheduled to attend the meeting.

Lavrov to visit Turkey on Nov 25

Hurriyet Daily News, 19.11.2015



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will pay a visit to Turkey on Nov. 25 to discuss issues including Syria, the fight against the ISIL and Cyprus as part of a meeting of the High-Level Russian-Turkish Cooperation Council's (ÜDİK).

Russian FM Spokesperson Maria Zakharova said Lavrov would attend a meeting of the Joint Strategic Planning Group, a sub-organ of ÜDİK, in Turkey, Anadolu Agency reported. The situation in Syria, the Middle East and North Africa, and the peace negotiations in Cyprus would be discussed in the meeting attended by Lavrov, said Zakharova, adding that the main topic would be the fight against terrorism.

The spokeswoman said Russia had submitted a revised draft U.N. resolution on fighting ISIL, adding that Russia was hoping for international support for its resolution, especially from France. The Russian draft text was first presented to the U.N. Security Council in late September but was rejected by the United States, Britain and France over a provision that calls for battling ISIL militants with the consent of the Syrian regime, a Moscow ally.

Zakharova said the new draft included clauses to prevent terrorists from using the holes in national legislations. Lavrov said Russia was ready to cooperate with the Western coalition fighting ISIL if its members respect Syria's sovereignty.



“We are ready for practical cooperation with those countries who are part of the coalition and are ready to develop with them such forms of coordination that of course would respect Syria’s sovereignty and the prerogatives of the Syrian leadership,” Lavrov was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies, Agence France-Press reported.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Barack Obama said that Syria’s civil war would not end unless Bashar al-Assad leaves power, discounting suggestions the Middle Eastern leader could take part in future elections. “I do not foresee a situation in which we can end the civil war in Syria while al-Assad remains in power,” Obama said on the sidelines of a trade summit in Manila.

Al-Assad’s fate has become a key stumbling block to peace in Syria and a point of contention between the West and al-Assad’s backers in Moscow and Tehran. Obama’s comments come days after meeting al-Assad’s top backer, Russian President Vladimir Putin, which appeared to see the two sides edge closer to an agreement.

Obama insisted Syrians would not accept al-Assad staying in power, after a brutal civil war that has seen his regime carry out indiscriminate attacks on civilians. “Even if I said that was okay, I still don’t think it would actually work,” Obama said.

Hours before Obama’s comments, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan again voiced his desire to create a no-fly zone and establish a train-and-equip program for Syrian rebels while floating the idea of building settlements for Syrian refugees in line with their “national architectural style.”

“A no-fly zone, terror-free zone and train-and-equip [program] – steps are needed on these issues. Now our relevant departments are carrying out work. Timing is another issue, but the process is under control. This step will be taken, some areas have especially been earmarked,” Erdoğan said in an interview aired on ATV and A Haber channels.

New housing that is in harmony with local architecture should be built in the area where Syrian refugees are located, the president said. A no-fly zone will protect them, while Syrian opposition forces will have the power to conduct a ground operation in the prospective area, he said. Meanwhile, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem plans to visit Russia on Nov. 25, Sputnik news agency reported, citing Syria’s embassy in Moscow.

Turkey, US to begin op for ISIL-free zone in Syria

Hurriyet Daily News, 18.11.2015



Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu confirmed to Hürriyet that NATO allies Ankara and Washington have agreed to stage a “joint operation” along Turkey’s border with Syria, with sources saying this is the start of a previously announced bid to establish an “ISIL-free zone.”

Sinirlioğlu was responding to a question on statements by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, who had said earlier in the day that the two countries would start an operation to complete the securing of the northern Syrian border, which has been used in the past by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants.

Military and diplomatic sources told Hürriyet that Kerry was referring to “a cleaning operation” to be conducted in a 98-kilometer long zone on the so-called “Mare-Jarablus line,” underlining that the campaign would kick-off soon. As the U.S. and Turkey together provide “air protection,” armed forces from the Free Syrian Army (FSA) will launch an offensive against ISIL.

Officials stressed that the Turkish Armed Forces will not put boots on the ground, though action will be taken against ISIL elements along the Turkey-Syria border. The Turkish military will hit ISIL targets in Syria by strikes launched from Turkish territory, they said. “We are pressing the button for the ‘ISIL-free zone’ that was publicly mentioned earlier,” a senior Turkish official speaking on condition of anonymity told Hürriyet.

“Seventy-five percent of Syria’s northern border has so far been shut down. And we are entering an operation with the Turks to shut off the remaining 98 kilometers,” Kerry said in an interview with CNN. Kerry, who was in the southern Turkish province of Antalya to attend the G-20 Summit, arrived in Paris to pay respects to the victims of the Nov. 13 terrorist attacks that killed 129 people.

The United States and Turkey hope that by sweeping ISIL from the border zone they can deprive it of a smuggling route that has seen its ranks swell with foreign fighters and its coffers boosted by illicit trade, Reuters said in report.

Earlier, speaking to reporters after meetings French President Francois Hollande and Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius in Paris, Kerry said increased coordination with Russia in the fight against ISIL militants would require progress in the political process to end the Syrian war. He added that agreements reached last week at the Vienna peace talks on Syria meant the country could be “weeks away, conceivably, of a big transition.” Kerry also referred to independently conducted U.S. and Russian air strikes in Syria.

In Vienna, Russia, the United States and powers from Europe and the Middle East outlined a plan for a political process in Syria leading to elections within two years, but differences remained on key issues such as the fate of President Bashar al-Assad. Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Barack Obama also spoke about Syria on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit.

Anti-ISIL operation in planning stage, Turkish FM says

Hurriyet Daily News, 18.11.2015



A joint Turkey and U.S. operation against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is still in the planning stage, Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu has said, while elaborating on parallel remarks by his U.S. counterpart, which were also confirmed by Turkish officials.

“We have some plans to end the Daesh presence in areas controlled by Daesh at our border,” the minister told Anadolu Agency, using an Arabic acronym for the jihadist group. “Once these plans are finalized, our operations will continue to a greater dimension. You will observe this in the upcoming days,” he said.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said that the two countries would start an operation to complete the securing of the northern Syrian border, which has been used in the past by ISIL militants. The statement was also confirmed by Sinirlioğlu, with Turkish military and diplomatic sources telling Hürriyet that Kerry was referring to “a cleaning operation” to be conducted in a 98-kilometer long zone on the so-called “Marea-Jarablus line,” underlining that the campaign would kick off soon.

“The entire border of northern Syria – 75 percent of it has now been shut off. And we are entering an operation with the Turks to shut off the other remaining 98 kilometers,” he said in an interview with CNN.

“As Mr. Kerry said, there is still a Daesh presence along some parts of the Turkish border,” Sinirlioğlu said. “We will not permit this presence,” he said, adding that some measures had been taken against any threat by Daesh.

The precautions were taken in coordination with the allies in the anti-ISIL coalition he added, avoiding giving further details of the plan. Responding to a question on Kerry’s choice of the word “operation,” Sinirlioğlu said this was a word also used by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and himself. “We have been conducting an air operation in that region with the U.S.,” he said. The majority at the Vienna meetings agreed that President Bashar al-Assad had no place in Syria’s future, Sinirlioğlu added.

Still, the U.S. and Russia have not totally agreed on the matter, according to the most recent statements by officials from the two countries. Russia said that following the carnage in Paris, it was now clear that global powers should unite without any preconditions regarding the fate of Syria's embattled leader, al-Assad. "It seems to me there are no longer any doubts that it is simply unacceptable to put forward any preconditions for joining forces in the fight against terror," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said after meeting his counterpart from Lebanon, Gebran Bassil, in Moscow.

However U.S. State Department deputy spokesperson Mark Toner said the U.S. has "our strong views on al-Assad, on other groups." "We've been very clear about saying that this needs to be – these need to be groups that are acceptable to both sides so that we can have a functional process set up, at least, to a political resolution," Toner said.

Turkey and Greece say both suffer from migration crisis

Hurriyet Daily News, 18.11.2015



Both Turkey and Greece are "sufferers" of the Syrian crisis, not the "responsible," Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said, referring to hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants travelling to Europe from Turkey through the Greek islands.

"As the sufferers, as parties affected by all these problems, we decided to conduct bilateral technical work," Davutoğlu said, speaking at a press conference by his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras, who is visiting Turkey. Tsipras, on his first official visit to Turkey, focused on grappling with the huge flow of refugees entering his country from Turkish territory.

The two leaders agreed on more bilateral mechanisms between relevant ministries and forming a working group to tackle the migrant crisis. The Greek coast guard commander has been in talks with his Turkish counterpart about measures in the Aegean Sea regarding illegal migration, Davutoğlu said, noting more regular dialogue would be established between parties.

Both leaders stressed that the responsibility of the refugee influx to Europe is not on Turkey and Syria, and urged international actors, like the European Union and United Nations Security Council, to take the burden.

"We disagree on efforts to put the entire burden on two countries," Davutoğlu said. Greece and Turkey must step up cooperation in the fight against smugglers who are transporting hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants to Europe from Turkey through the Greek islands, Greek prime minister said. "This is not merely a problem of Turkey and Greece. Europe should take responsibility... We need to maintain settlement assurance to migrants," Tsipras added.

Tsipras suggested a previous proposal made to the EU to establish hot spots in Syria's neighboring countries, so that migrants would be registered. "You could call them accommodation centers or identification centers," he stated. Tsipras, who arrived in Turkey, attended an international football friendly between Turkey and Greece with Davutoğlu, but the match was overshadowed by some Turkish fans booing the Greek team during a minute of silence for the victims of the Paris attacks.

He also met with the Istanbul-based Greek Patriarch Bartholomew I, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians. The leaders also discussed ongoing reunification talks for Cyprus. Turkey and Greece have a window of opportunity to act on the partition of Cyprus, Davutoğlu said, adding he believed Athens would increase support for Ankara's bid to join the European Union.

"There is a window of opportunity right now over the Cyprus issue. The negotiations are going on. We have a common approach with Greece to contribute positively to the talks," Davutoğlu said at a joint press conference with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, who is visiting Turkey. "We have decided to encourage the two communities in Cyprus," Tsipras said for his part. The Turkish prime minister said they would build ties with Greece based on a positive agenda, and would hold fourth meeting of high level cooperation council in February 2016.

Senior Banker: Public-private partnerships key to Turkey's economy

Anadolu Agency, 18.11.2015



Increasing the number of public-private partnerships (PPPs) will be a key factor in developing Turkey's economy, a senior official of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has said.

Hüseyin Özhan, who took up the post as the new head of the EBRD's Ankara office, told Anadolu Agency that developing Turkey's infrastructure would depend on attracting private capital to new partnerships. "Having been a banker for many years, I can say that Turkey has the chance to create the conditions in which private investment can find real opportunities for returns in these partnerships," Özhan said.

A good example, he noted, was the construction and operation of a new domestic terminal at Dalaman airport in the southwestern Turkish province of Muğla under a public-private partnership scheme.

The bank has lent 175 million euros (\$186.6 million) to YDA Airport Construction and Operation, a special-purpose company set up by the Turkish construction and infrastructure company YDA Construction, which was awarded the concession contract.

“To increase the development of PPPs the right regulatory and legal conditions are required, so that businesses see risk-controlled opportunities for safe returns,” he said. “We work in close cooperation with the Turkish government to help evolve these conditions.”

One of the European bank’s goals is to increase economic inclusion in Turkey, where youth unemployment is high and the number of women in the workforce is still relatively low, Özhan said. “We will help financial institutions extend opportunities to women and young people who are often shut out of access to funding and loans,” he said.

“This is critical to Turkey’s development. Bringing in Turkey’s burgeoning young population into economic activity will go far to boost growth in the country.” Being located in Ankara is a boon, Özhan said, because he will also spearhead projects in Central Anatolia. The European bank recently lent 100 million euros (\$106.6 million) to Turkish Finansbank, to be disbursed largely among the agriculture and agribusiness sectors in the region.

“There are vast opportunities in this region which we intend to help Turkey develop,” he said. As head of the Ankara office, Özhan will lead the European bank’s cooperation with the Turkish government, Ankara-based international financial institutions, diplomatic missions and civil society organizations. He will also oversee the bank’s business in Ankara and the Central Anatolia regions, the bank said in a statement.

Turkey’s non-financing institutions see sharp rise in profits

Hurriyet Daily News, 13.11.2015



Non-banking institutions, including financial leasing, factoring and financing companies, increased their consolidated profit by 16.7 percent to 1.35 billion Turkish Liras in the first nine months of the year compared to the last year due to a sharp rise in demand from the real sector.

Total assets of these three sectors also increased by 25.2 percent to 93.76 billion liras in the mentioned period, said the head of the FKB, Osman Zeki Özger. According to data, there are 110 companies under the heading of the FKB, 69 of which are factoring companies, 28 financial leasing companies and 13 financing companies.

The share of these companies in Turkey’s finance sector is around 3.8 percent by asset volume and 5.3 percent by the volume of loans that are mobilized. “Despite the fluctuations in financial markets, domestic uncertainties and geopolitical problems, FKB members have kept supporting the real sector,” said Özger, adding that the 2016 performance is expected to be good with the maintenance of political stability and economic reform agenda. FKB members offered around 83 billion liras of financing in the first nine months of the year, he noted.

Turkey condemns attack on Syrian Turkmen village, summons Russian envoy

Hurriyet Daily News, 13.11.2015



Turkish PM Davutoğlu has condemned bombing attack targeting Turkmen villages in Syria, while Turkish Foreign Ministry has summoned Russian ambassador over incident.

“From here, we are once more warning the Syrian regime. We have reacted to all the attacks aimed at civilians close to our border without making any discrimination in regards to whether they have been Turkmen, Arab or Kurdish, not only because they have been Turkmen. At the moment, 40 Turkmen are wounded. We are following the matter village by village,” Davutoğlu told an adding Turkish officials contacted their Russian counterparts over the issue.

“In recent days, there have been many intensified attacks against Syrian people in general and against our Turkmen siblings in particular, especially in the Bayırbucak neighborhood. All of last night, we made assessments with our military, intelligence and diplomatic units. Before everything else, this attack has revealed how the Syrian regime is bloody and barbarian,” he said.

“First of all, we are against all kinds of attacks launched against civilian people. The second point, we are against all kinds of attacks leading to a new influx of refugees at our border. The third point: the Bayırbucak Turkmen are our siblings who have lived there for centuries, like other Syrians. We are condemning this barbarian attack against them in the strongest way and once more, calling on everybody to be sensitive to this issue. Nobody can legitimize massacres targeting our Turkmen, Arab and Kurdish siblings there by claiming to have been fighting terror,” Davutoğlu said.

Within minutes of Davutoğlu delivering his remarks, the Turkish Foreign Ministry released a written statement on the same issue. Upon an order by Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioğlu, Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov was summoned to the ministry, the statement said.

During the meeting with Karlov, “It was underlined that the Russian side’s actions were bombing civilian Turkmen villages, not fighting terror, which may lead to serious consequences,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tanju Bilgiç said in the statement, which came in the form of an official answer to a journalist’s question.

Turkish officials told Karlov they wanted Russia to “end this operation as soon as possible,” Bilgiç said, noting the same kind of warning was also conveyed to Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, who is Russian President Vladimir Putin’s special representative for the Middle East and Africa, during a telephone conversation. Turkey’s state-run Anadolu Agency reported the Syrian regime forces expanded their ground operations to the Bayırbucak Turkmen area of the rural town of Latakia.

The agency cited local sources as saying that regime forces, with the support of Russian air strikes, conducted simultaneous attacks on the Fırınlık, Acısı, and Avanlı regions of the Turkmen mountain area near the border city of Kasab.

Ankara has traditionally expressed solidarity with the Syrian Turkmen, who are Syrians of Turkish descent. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has voiced his concern about Russia's increasing involvement in the Syrian conflict and expressed anger at Russian incursions into Turkish air space in October.

Russia's air strikes in support of President Bashar al-Assad's forces have shifted the balance of power in the conflict and dealt a setback to Turkey's aim of seeing al-Assad removed from power. The Foreign Ministry said Turkmen villages were subject to "heavy bombardment" by the Russian planes in the Bayırbucak area of northwest Syria, close to Turkey's Yayladağ border in the Hatay province.

Obama says Assad must go to end Syria civil war

AFP, 19.11.2015



US President Obama said Syria's civil war would not end unless Assad leaves power, discounting suggestions the Middle Eastern leader could take part in future elections.

"I do not foresee a situation in which we can end the civil war in Syria while Assad remains in power," Obama said on the sidelines of a trade summit in Manila. Assad's fate has become a key stumbling block to peace in Syria and a point of contention between the West and Assad's backers in Moscow and Tehran. Obama's comments come days after meeting Assad's top backer, Russian President Putin, which appeared to see the two sides edge closer to an agreement.

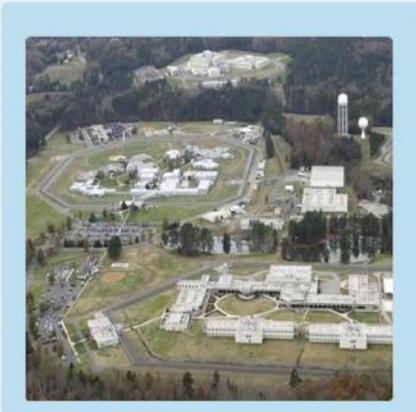
Russia, seeking to maintain its foothold in Syria, has strongly opposed Assad's ouster. But Obama insisted Syrians would not accept Assad staying in power, after a brutal civil war that has seen his regime carry out indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

"Even if I said that was okay, I still don't think it would actually work," Obama said. "You could not get the Syrian people -- the majority of them -- to agree to that kind of outcome." Ending the four year war in Syria has taken on increasing urgency as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group has gained more and more territory, assets and recruits.

The militants are suspected of carrying out large-scale terror attacks in Paris, Beirut and the bombing of a Russian airliner, killing hundreds of civilians.

Israeli PM: Israeli spy Pollard set free from US prison

Reuters, 20.11.2015



Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard was released on parole in the United States after 30 years in prison, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, a case that became a serious strain in relations between the close allies.

“The people of Israel welcome the release of Jonathan Pollard,” Netanyahu said in a statement. “After three long and difficult decades, Jonathan has been reunited with his family.” Under the terms of his parole, Pollard, a former U.S. Navy analyst, must remain in the United States for five years. He was sentenced to life in prison after being convicted in 1987 of passing reams of classified information to Israel.

Now 61, Pollard has said he wants to immigrate to Israel, where his second wife lives and where he can expect to receive substantial Israeli government back-pay. He was granted Israeli citizenship while in prison.

“This is a dramatic moment ... This is a historic moment that brings to an end a tremendous effort that spanned many years,” Effie Lahav, head of the committee in Israel that lobbied for Pollard’s release, said on Army Radio. Netanyahu has instructed Israelis to stay low-key about Pollard’s release because of concern that too warm a celebration might damage efforts to persuade the U.S. government to let him leave for Israel sooner.

Successive U.S. administrations had resisted Israeli calls to show the unrepentant Pollard clemency, though Washington did, at times, mull an early release as part of its efforts to revive talks on Palestinian statehood in Israel-occupied territories.

Pollard’s legal team has called on U.S. President Barack Obama to allow him to go to Israel immediately after release from federal prison in North Carolina, while noting that he has a job and a place to live in the United States.

Lavrov says pre-conditions on Assad departure 'unacceptable' for joining forces against ISIL

AFP, 10.11.2015



Russia said that following the carnage in Paris it was now clear that global powers should unite without any preconditions on the fate of Syria's leader Assad. "It seems to me there are no longer any doubts that it is simply unacceptable to put forward any pre-conditions for joining forces in the fight against terror," Russian FM Lavrov said after meeting his counterpart from Lebanon Gebran Bassil.

After the Paris massacre that claimed the lives of at least 129 people, French President Hollande has called for the creation of a broad anti-IS coalition and will discuss the proposal with both US President Obama and Russian President Putin.

Lavrov expressed hope that other Western powers would follow suit and would be more open to cooperating with Moscow in Syria. "I hope that the change in position of our Western colleagues -- which unfortunately came at the cost of the terrible terror attacks -- will be seen on the part of our other Western partners," Russia's top diplomat said.

To help "mobilise a genuinely global coalition," the UN Security Council should put together a firm "legal basis" that would enable global powers to fight the Islamic State group together, Lavrov said without providing further details. He also denied that an agreement on the fate of Assad had been reached at the latest round of talks in Vienna last week.

Putin has been seeking to capitalise on shifting dynamics in the West following the Nov. 13 terror attacks in Paris and the bombing of a Russian passenger plane over Sinai in October, reiterating his call for Russia and the West to unite against a common enemy.

Russia admitted that the Airbus A321 carrying 224 people, most of them Russian holidaymakers, was knocked out of sky by a bomb, pledging vengeance and stepping up its Syria strikes.

France says Russia open to cooperation in fight against ISIL in Syria

AFP, 18.11.2015



French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said that Russia was sincere in wanting to cooperate in the fight against the ISIL group in Syria.

“There is an opening, so to speak, with the Russians. We think they are sincere and we must bring together all our forces,” Fabius told. Relations between France and Russia have deteriorated since last year’s Ukraine crisis. But both countries have suffered major terror attacks at the hands of ISIL -- the coordinated gun and bomb attacks in Paris, and the bombing of a Russian passenger jet over Egypt.

President Francois Hollande called for the “bringing together of all those who can realistically fight against this terrorist army in a large and unique coalition”, while his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin ordered his navy in the Mediterranean to establish contact with its French counterparts and work together “as allies”.

Tsipras visits Istanbul Patriarchate for first time as Greek PM

AFP, 28.10.2015



Alexis Tsipras paid a visit to Istanbul’s Fener Greek Orthodox Patriarchate for the first time as Greek prime minister.

The 41-year-old leader met with Patriarch Bartholomew I, the Istanbul-based leader of Orthodox Christians, at the Patriarchate’s administrative building in Istanbul’s historic Fener neighborhood. Speaking to the press after hour-long meeting, Bartholomew I said they discussed ongoing refugee crisis as well as the institution’s relations with Greece and interreligious dialogue. “[Tsipras] has now visited us three times and we met also in Athens. We know each other very well. I wish him success on his difficult task,” he said.

Tsipras is in Turkey for a two-day visit to discuss measures to deal with the refugee crisis among other issues. More than 150,000 migrants and refugees crossed from Turkey to Greece last month, compared with more than 8,500 in October 2014, according to the EU’s border agency Frontex.

EU leaders have agreed to discuss a 3 billion-euro (\$3.23 billion) deal with Turkey for refugee support and to try to stem the tide of people fleeing the Syrian conflict. According to official figures, Turkey has so far spent \$8 billion on accommodating around 2.5 million refugees it hosts inside the country.

Tsipras arrived in Istanbul, watching the friendly football match between Turkey and Greece in the stadium alongside Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. The Greek prime minister is also expected to meet President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during his visit, as well as other political party leaders in the country.

France wants UN to authorize ‘all necessary measures’ against ISIL

Anadolu Agency, 12.11.2015



France asked the UN Security Council to authorize countries to “take all necessary measures” to fight the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group after the jihadists claimed responsibility for the Paris attacks.

A draft resolution presented to the 15-member council called on UN member states to “redouble and coordinate their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts” committed by ISIL and other extremist groups linked to Al-Qaeda. The French draft resolution does not provide any legal basis for military action and does not invoke chapter seven of the UN charter that authorizes the use of force.

French diplomats maintain, however, that it will provide important international political support to the anti-ISIL campaign that has been ramped up since the attacks in Paris that left 129 dead. “The exceptional and unprecedented threat posed by this group to the entire international community requires a strong, united and unambiguous response from the Security Council,” French Ambassador Francois Delattre said.

“This is the goal of our draft resolution, which calls on all member states to take all necessary measures to fight Daesh (ISIL).” Delattre said he was seeking rapid approval of the draft resolution that was “put in blue” -- a UN term designating that a final version is ready for a vote at the Security Council.

France’s bid for UN backing came after Russia submitted a revised text of a separate draft resolution that calls for fighting the IS group with Syria’s consent. That draft has been rejected by the United States, Britain and France, which are refusing to cooperate with President Bashar al-Assad’s regime, whom they accuse of fomenting extremism by resorting to brutality. British Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, whose country chairs the council, said the Russian measure “seeks to legitimize the authority of Assad” and added that it did “not have much prospect.”

Russia and the West have been unable to overcome differences over Assad's future, with the United States and its European and Gulf allies pressing for a clear timetable for the Syrian leader to exit from power.

Sounding a conciliatory note, Moscow's UN envoy Vitaly Churkin indicated that he did not have any objections to the French text, and suggested that the Russian measure could be adopted at a later time. Churkin recalled that after the September 11, 2001 attacks, there was a first resolution adopted quickly, followed by a broader one, and said "it may well be that we will go down that road again."

The French draft text describes ISIL as a "global and unprecedented threat to international peace and security" and said sanctions would soon be imposed against ISIL group leaders and supporters. The text "unequivocally condemns in the strongest terms the horrifying terrorist attacks" by the ISIL group in Paris and Beirut, and also mentions violence in Tunisia, Turkey and Egypt this year.

French President Francois Hollande is due to meet Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and US leader Barack Obama next week for talks aimed at stepping up the campaign against the extremists, who have overrun large areas of Syria and Iraq in a brutal offensive.

Europol chief says further attacks likely after Paris carnage

AFP, 10.11.2015



Europe is likely to face new Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) attacks after those in Paris on Nov. 13, the head of Europol, the coordinating organisation of EU countries' police forces, said.

"It is reasonable to assume ... that further attacks are likely," Europol director Rob Wainwright told lawmakers in a hearing in the European Parliament in Brussels. He compared the Nov. 13 events in Paris to those in Mumbai in 2008, when militants killed 166 people at different locations across the Indian city. "The reality of what happened in Mumbai then has now arrived in Europe," Wainwright said.

"This is clearly therefore a more significant and threatening form of terrorism than the phenomenon of the lone actor," he added, referring to attacks over recent years by individuals or small groups inspired by ISIL. "It's also a clear statement of intent by ISIS [ISIL] to export its brutal brand of terrorism to Europe to take it more onto the international stage." Noting other attacks including last month's downing of a Russian airliner in Egypt, he added: "We are dealing with a very serious, well resourced, determined international terrorist organisation that is now active on the streets of Europe."

This represents the most serious terrorist threat faced in Europe for 10 years.” The hearing comes on the eve of an extraordinary meeting of EU interior and justice ministers to discuss measures after the attacks in Paris.

Japan dips into recession again

AFP, 16.11.2015



Japan’s economy slipped into recession for the second time since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe came to power nearly three years ago, data showed, dealing a fresh blow to his drive to kick start weak growth and end years of deflation.

Abe has staked his reputation on a policy blitz of fiscal spending, aggressive monetary policy easing and structural reforms, dubbed Abenomics, aimed at reviving the world’s third-largest economy. Japan’s economy has been overtaken by rival China, while it struggles with a challenging demographic outlook that is expected to see its population shrink by the tens of millions in coming decades.

Still, it boasts some of the world’s biggest companies, including in the automotive sector, and banks, and its domestic technology plays a key role in powering a wide array of global industries, including vehicles, electronics and high-end machinery.

But the Cabinet Office said that gross domestic product (GDP) shrank 0.2 percent in the July-September period, or an annualized contraction of 0.8 percent, marking the second straight quarterly decline, which is considered a technical recession.

It was also below the 0.1 percent forecast in a Bloomberg News survey. The economy contracted in 2014 after consumers tightened their belts following an increase in the country’s consumption tax, which put a dent in a nascent recovery. That downturn spurred the Bank of Japan to sharply increase its already massive bond-buying program, effectively printing money to spur lending.

In a bright sign, the government slightly improved its April-June data to a 0.2 percent contraction from 0.3 percent shrinkage previously estimated. The latest figures will turn attention back to the BoJ ahead of a policy meeting this week to see whether it adds to its 80 trillion yen (\$653 billion) annual stimulus program.

Three regions and the imperative of US leadership

Hurriyet Daily News, 19.11.2015



Within deep change often lies great challenge as well as vast opportunity. This time in history is no exception for the United States, a country emerging from a period in which it was the world's sole superpower into a new era featuring "the rise of the rest," including China.

The emergence of an array of new powers on the global stage over recent decades is, in reality, not at all an indicator of the United States' absolute decline, but a direct byproduct of American post-World War II vision, leadership, and strategy when America's greatest statesmen erected the international economic and security architecture for a new era.

That architecture encouraged other nations to buy into the system and its rules, and for the most part, many emerging powers did just that. But the system is now beginning to fray, and if the United States chooses not to exercise vision, leadership, and strategy to reinforce it then we are in for turbulent times that will make all of us less secure and the global economy less prosperous. The past five years have included growing, ominous portents of significant dangers that are the result of a perception in three key regions of the world of a less active and "present" United States.

In the first region, Asia, which is enjoying a long-term, dramatic increase in economic activity, security competition is rising concomitantly. China's military capabilities have been growing steadily for decades, and over the past five years, Chinese leaders have begun to use their now robust military assets to stake groundless claims in disputed seas in the western Pacific, causing great concern among many of its neighbors, including Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia.

China is testing and probing the long-standing regional security regime that has been underpinned by a US military presence, seeing if and how the former sole superpower will respond. It took the United States too long, but now that US military forces are routinely transiting international waters that China asserts are its own — including a recent speech by Defense Secretary Ashton Carter on the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier on the high seas near the disputed areas — the security of the region where the world's two greatest powers reside should be enhanced, at least until the next set of Chinese probes.

Unfortunately, in the second region, Europe, the trends are more worrisome. It turns out that Russia's President-for-Life, Vladimir Putin, never bought into the post-Cold War system that his ostensible Western partners thought was an expanding zone of peace and stability since 1989. With Russia's unilateral annexation of Crimea and paramilitary invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014, Europe once again has become insecure, Russia once again has become isolated from Europe, and the risks of miscalculation or accidents quickly triggering a major crisis are higher than at any time since the height of the Cold War.



The modest and delayed US response to the new Russian challenge has encouraged Putin, who knows that Russian power is declining and therefore that he has less and less to lose by engaging in increasingly risky behavior. Until the United States and its NATO allies reinvigorate and reorient European military posture in such a fashion that Putin is convinced of transatlantic resolve, then European insecurity will continue to grow.

Europe is also dealing with the greatest mass migration since World War II, as hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing the disintegration, carnage, and misery of much of the third region, the Middle East. The region is in flames, as a senior Mideast official recently told me, and the cauldron of the fire is centered in Syria and Iraq.

The Obama administration has sought to ignore Syria since its descent into hell began in 2011, but it really should have known that this would be impossible as it watched the number of foreign fighters flowing into and back out of Syria increase dramatically; this is the growing pool of extremists that may produce the next major terrorist attacks on Europe and the United States. So, it turns out, as many predicted, that Syria is not just a humanitarian disaster that has cost a quarter million Syrian lives, but also a vital threat to the United States and its allies.

Other Middle East threats abound, particularly an Iran that shows no signs of stopping its destabilizing challenges to the sovereignty of key states, as the lifting of sanctions as part of the nuclear deal gives Iranian hardliners more resources to fund such activities. In the context of these and other threats, US regional partners such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates see US withdrawal and disengagement from the region as nothing less than alarming. If the United States pushed back against Iran at even half the scope and pace of its efforts in Asia, it would go a long way toward reassuring its allies and curtailing further regional instability.

Turkey lies at the intersection of all three regions – Asia, Europe, and the Middle East – and as such, may have the most to gain and the most to lose depending on how the most important factor for global security over the next few years unfolds – the extent to which the United States chooses to exercise leadership during an inflection point in history.



Announcements & Reports

► *Squaring The Cycle: Capital Flows, Financial Cycles, and Macro-Prudential Policy in The Euro Area*

Source : Bruegel

Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2015/11/squaring-the-cycle-capital-flows-financial-cycles-and-macro-prudential-policy-in-the-euro-area/>

► *Israel and the Palestinians: The Issues that the Obama-Netanyahu Meeting Failed to Address*

Source : CSIS

Weblink : <http://csis.org/publication/israel-and-palestinians-issues-obama-netanyahu-meeting-failed-address>

► *2016 Global Forecast*

Source : CSIS

Weblink : <http://csis.org/publication/2016-global-forecast>

Upcoming Events

► *Secular Stagnation in Europe and Japan*

Date : 21 November 2015

Place : Brussels - Belgium

Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/secular-stagnation-in-europe-and-japan/>

► *The Role of The Nordic Social Model in The Future*

Date : 22 November 2015

Place : Brussels - Belgium

Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/the-role-of-the-nordic-social-model-in-the-future/>

► *Lebanon's Deepening Domestic Crisis*

Date : 22 November 2015

Place : Washington DC – The USA

Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/10/12-lebanon-domestic-crisis>



► *The Politics of The Fed: Past, Present and Future*

Date : 22 November 2015
Place : Washington DC – The USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/10/22-politics-of-the-fed-past-present-and-future>

► *Supporting Military Families and Veterans, Sustaining The All-Volunteer Force*

Date : 29 November 2015
Place : Washington – The USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/10/29-military-families-veterans-lifestyle-survey>

► *Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union*

Date : 23 December 2015
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 : 24 December 2015
Place : London - UK
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>

► *Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?*

Date : 26 December 2015
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 December 2015
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 : 28 December 2015
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 December 2015
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 : 29 December 2015

Place : Berlin - Germany

Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>