

Turkish government says it is ‘under popular pressure’ to drop EU talks

Hurriyet Daily News, 06.09.2016



Turkish citizens are dismayed by the “double standards” applied by the European Union since Turkey’s coup attempt of July 15 and are now putting the government under “huge pressure” to end accession negotiations, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavu o lu has claimed.

Çavu o lu accused the bloc of “dishing out criticism” but not accepting it in return. “Turkish people see the double standards. We are under huge pressure to stop the negotiation process,” he told, adding that Turks had been disappointed not to receive prompt solidarity visits or statements in the aftermath of the coup attempt.

Separately, a delay in Turkey’s visa liberalization deal with the bloc until the end of the year is out of the question, a spokesman for President Recep Tayyip Erdo an said, adding that “only minor issues” remain to be resolved. brahim Kalın told private broadcaster NTV that he believed the remaining issues would be solved soon.

German newspaper Welt am Sonntag had reported that Turkey was willing to delay the introduction of the new visa rules to the end of the year from October. The deal projects Turkey’s readmission of Syrian refugees who illegally crossed to Europe in return for visa-free travel for its citizens.

However, the EU’s insistence on a change in Turkey’s anti-terror law, a part of a 72-item list for the deal, has led to estrangement in the talks. Ankara says such a shift is not possible due to terror risks that the country has been facing, mainly posed by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the followers of the U.S.-based preacher Fethullah Gülen, believed to be behind the bloody coup attempt.

Turkish minister announces ‘very strong consensus’ with EU

Hurriyet Daily News, 03.09.2016



Turkey's European Union minister and chief negotiator with the bloc, Ömer Çelik, said on Sept. 3 that his meeting with the bloc's 28 foreign ministers had resulted in a "very strong consensus" that they should work more closely after ties soured.

Çelik expressed Turkey's strong disappointment with the EU's initial reaction to the failed coup attempt on July 15. "As a result of the meeting, there is very strong consensus about focusing on a positive agenda and further enhancing cooperation between Turkey and the EU," Çelik told reporters after his talks with EU ministers in Bratislava.

Çelik told journalists that Turkey would "continue to implement" the migrant deal reached in March with the EU even if its demands on visa liberalization were not met. At the same time, he warned that without a visa deal, Ankara would not be part of any new arrangement to manage what he said were expectations of a greater migrant influx in the future. "The [migrant] mechanism will not be enough... so we need a new mechanism," he said. "And if [there is] no liberalization, Turkey will not be very positive in setting up a new mechanism."

In exchange for its help to curb the flow of migrants into the bloc, Turkey expects visa-free travel inside the EU's Schengen zone for its citizens, which the EU says it can grant only after Turkey fulfills all of the 72 criteria, which also includes an amendment to Turkey's anti-terror law.

Çelik said that the current security situation meant it was not realistic to expect the Turkish government to relax its anti-terror laws now, as required by the EU. He did not rule out, however, it could be done in the future and said Ankara was ready for talks on that with the Council of Europe, a European human rights body of which Turkey is a member.

Çelik said the EU should move ahead on visa liberalization but Federica Mogherini, the EU's top foreign policy official, suggested that would only happen if Turkey met existing EU "benchmarks" on human rights. "The main message all shared is first of all, the strong recommitment to dialogue; that we talk less about each and more with each other," Mogherini told a press conference at the end of the two-day foreign ministers meeting.

"We agreed that all previous agreements will be respected, be it on visa liberalization, the Customs Union, the management of refugee flows... all tracks will continue," she said. Meanwhile, German newspaper Welt am Sonntag said that Turkey was now willing to accept the liberalization of travel visa rules by the end of the year instead of October, as previously targeted, citing senior Turkish government sources. Ankara had previously threatened to walk away from an EU migrant deal should it not get more relaxed travel rules in October.



Welt am Sonntag quoted senior Turkish officials familiar with the EU talks as saying that a delay until November or December was now seen as acceptable. However, Turkish officials were still insisting on securing visa liberalization “no later than the end of the year,” the newspaper said, according to Reuters.

EU President Donald Tusk said Europe was “close to limits” on its ability to accept new waves of refugees, urging the broader international community to shoulder its share of the burden.

“The practical capability of Europe to host new waves of refugees, not to mention irregular economic migrants, is close to limits,” he told a press conference on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in China’s Hangzhou. At the same time, he said that because Turkey was an EU candidate country, it is expected to live up to EU values, citing rule of law, media freedom “and of course the death penalty.”

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had voiced reintroducing the death penalty into Turkey’s legal system after the coup attempt, during which more than 250 people were killed, on grounds the nation wanted it. Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn told Reuters after the EU ministers’ meeting with Çelik that a rapprochement with Turkey was needed.

“On the political level we need a rapprochement, we need to normalize the situation,” said Asselborn. “It’s the first time since the coup that we spoke to each other, not about one another. But we cannot forget the rule of law. Everyone around the table said that if they want to stabilize the situation, they must come back to the rule of law as quickly as possible.”

Speaking after the meeting in Bratislava, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Turkish counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu would travel to Strasbourg next week to discuss the Council of Europe’s role in preparing post-coup prosecutions in Turkey.

Steinmeier also told reporters that Germany stood by Turkey after the coup attempt and had high respect for the Turkish people who rose up to put down the plot. He acknowledged German statements had perhaps lacked the empathy that Ankara expected.

Erdoğan: No Syria plan without Turkish consent possible after Jarablus operation

Hurriyet Daily News, 08.09.2016



Turkey's "successful and rapid" cross-border operation into Syria "to clear the border of jihadists has changed the world's view of the region," President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has stated, claiming that no longer can any plan in Syria be implemented without Turkish consent.

"The fact that Turkey carried out operation into Syria successfully and rapidly has changed the world's view of region. It is no longer possible to implement scenario that does not include Turkey or does not have Turkey's consent," Erdoğan said, adding the balances "have drastically changed" since Turkey liberated Jarablus from the ISIL.

Turkey launched its Euphrates Shield operation with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to push ISIL from its borders and was able to clear jihadists from the Jarablus-Azaz line within the first two weeks of the incursion. Erdoğan said Jarablus has been fully cleared of ISIL militants and Turkish troops will continue to pursue them in the surrounding area.

"We'll continue. Until when? There is no need to reveal this, but we have our own plan for securing the Turkish borders," he added. Referring to the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party's (PYD) efforts to link its cantons together, Erdoğan said Turkey cannot tolerate the establishment of a "terror corridor."

"Instead, we'll turn this border into a 'peace corridor.' We have no eye on taking any of Syria's territory," he added. Responding to criticism from some quarters that the Euphrates Shield operation may have violated international law, Erdoğan referred to the "cruelty" of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

"They say: 'You can't enter there if the host country does not invite you.' Sorry but we can enter there upon the invitation of the people who are the real owners of this country. The leader of that country is cruel. Are we going to seek permission from someone who has killed 600,000 people?" he said.

Erdoğan also criticized arguments that Turkey should not widen its fronts and fight against both ISIL and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) at the same time. "Expanding these fronts is a matter of faith," he said, adding Turkey is currently conducting the "biggest operations in its history" against the PKK in southeast Anatolia. "From now on we have to show that we exist in the region. We don't have any option to step back at this point," Erdoğan had said while returning from the G-20 Summit in China.

Turkish FM assures ECHR will be Turkey's guide

Hurriyet Daily News, 07.09.2016



Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has sought to assure the Council of Europe (CoE) that the Turkish government will be transparent in the post-coup attempt process, underlining that the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) would continue to be Turkey's guide, even during difficult times.

“Monitoring by the Court of Human Rights is in place; the European Convention of Human Rights as always guides [Turkey], even at these difficult times,” Çavuşoğlu said while speaking at a press conference after briefing his fellow ministers at the CoE of the situation in his country after the botched coup.

They have never forgotten that rule of law prevails in Turkey and everybody should give account in the judicial process, the Çavuşoğlu stated, adding Turkish security forces arrested those who intended to assassinate the president without hurting them so they could be put on trial. Discussions with the CoE were very fruitful, he said, adding that Turkey and the European body cooperated to make this process transparent.

In this framework, a delegation from the Justice Ministry had talks in Strasbourg to revive this working group, Çavuşoğlu said. Discussions on the death penalty were brought to the agenda by the people of Turkey after the coup attempt in a sentimental environment, but there was a more rational atmosphere emerging in Turkey in order to discuss the issue, he said.

The also minister stated that “threats” and “ill and negative statements” from Brussels had prompted such sentiments from the Turkish people. The council's head, Thorbjørn Jagland, for his part, said Turkish officials were open with the CoE, stressing the practice of the council's norms in prosecutions and taking evidence into consideration.

“What is important now is to see that all judicial safeguards are in place and that the presumption of innocence prevails,” said Jagland. During their meeting Çavuşoğlu and Jagland discussed what help the council could provide on matters in respect to the rule of law.

Turkish border with Syria cleared of ISIL militants

Hurriyet Daily News, 05.09.2016



The Turkish border with Syria was cleared of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants, after the Turkish-supported Free Syrian Army (FSA) took control of all regions from Azaz to the west to Jarablus to the east.

The news came 12 days after the Turkish army launched Operation Euphrates Shield, aimed at improving border security, supporting coalition forces and eliminating the threat posed by terrorist organizations, especially ISIL. The FSA liberated new villages, a day after the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) entered Syria's al-Rai district from the Elbeyli district in the Turkish border province of Kilis.

Syrian opposition forces removed ISIL militants from the villages of Tuwayran, Khaliliye, Bab Lemon, Hajj Wali and others in the al-Rai region. With the new FSA-controlled belt extending three to five kilometers inside Syrian territory, ISIL's physical contact with the Turkish border has been totally eliminated.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım said that Turkey's border was totally freed of "terrorists." "From Azaz to Jarabulus, 91-km of our border has been completely secured. All terrorist organizations have been repulsed and they have gone," Yıldırım said during a televised speech while visiting the southeastern province of Diyarbakır.

Ankara-backed FSA forces have started moving south to capture al-Bab from ISIL, Do an News Agency reported. On the other side of the operation, FSA fighters reached 24 kilometers south of the Turkish border inside Syria and arrived in a region west of the Euphrates River. Meanwhile, the military has announced that FSA fighters seized control in seven more villages as a part of the operation.

It added that the Turkish artillery units fired 99 shots at nine targets in the 13th day of the operation. A total of 1,698 shots were fired at 392 targets since the beginning of the operation on Aug. 24, according to military.

FSA took control of the villages of Ganime and Suwaya, west of Jarablus, as well as al-Qadi, the last ISIL-controlled village along the Turkish-Syrian border. Less than two weeks after Operation Euphrates Shield was launched, the Turkish proxies have taken an area totaling nearly 600 square kilometers from ISIL and the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), which Turkey regards as a terror organization. The difference in the designation of the PYD and its military wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG), has caused rift between Turkey and the U.S., with the latter seeing the PYD and YPG as reliable resources on the ground in the fight against ISIL.

U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL Brett McGurk welcomed the sealing of the border. “Welcome progress in sealing final 98-kilometer strip of Turkish border from #ISIL terrorists, who increasingly have no way out. #ISIS #Daesh,” read McGurk’s tweet posted on his personal Twitter account.

A U.S. State Department spokesman told AFP that McGurk met with forces from the Kurdish-Arab Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance inside Syria last week and also with officials in Turkey. The SDF alliance is led by the YPG, and recently captured the town of Manbij from ISIL, prompting alarm in Ankara and demands that Kurdish forces withdraw east of the Euphrates River.

The spokesman said McGurk pledged “ongoing U.S. support for the SDF in the fight against ISIL, while emphasizing the need for strict adherence to prior commitments,” a reference to demands for the SDF to withdraw east of the Euphrates.

“In all of his meetings, he encouraged unity of effort and de-confliction between all forces fighting ISIL in northern Syria,” the spokesman said. McGurk also held talks last week in Turkey, the spokesman added. “He met with senior Turkish officials to discuss U.S. support for efforts to clear ISIL entirely from the border region... and also discussed planning for the Mosul campaign in Iraq, and closer U.S. and Turkish cooperation to accelerate ISIL’s ultimate defeat,” the spokesman said.

Russia: Israel, Palestinian leaders agree to meet for talks

AP, 08.09.2016



Russian Foreign Ministry announced that Israeli and Palestinian leaders have agreed “in principle” to meet in Moscow for talks in what the Russians hope will relaunch Mideast peace talks after a more than a two-year break.

According to ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Moscow has heard from the offices of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the two agreed to meet in the Russian capital, though it was not clear when that will happen. “The most important thing is to pick the right timing,” Zakharova told reporters. “Intensive contacts on this are ongoing.”

The comments indicated that Russia is pushing forward with its efforts to host the meeting. Abbas said this week that a meeting scheduled in Moscow had been postponed at Israel’s request. Abbas and Netanyahu exchanged a brief handshake last year at a global climate change conference in Paris but have not held a public working meeting since 2010. The key stumbling block to the meeting is the agenda.

Abbas has said that he would only meet Netanyahu if Israel freezes settlement construction on occupied lands claimed by the Palestinians and carries out a previously agreed-on release of Palestinian prisoners. Netanyahu has rejected the terms and said a meeting should take place without conditions.

Any meeting between the two men would represent a breakthrough of sorts. The last round of peace U.S.-brokered peace talks broke down nearly two-and-a-half years ago without any progress. But with Abbas and Netanyahu at odds on nearly every major issue between them, chances for substantial progress would seem slim.

If a meeting were to take place, it would reflect the growing Russian influence in the Middle East. The Russian military has sent fighter jets to Syria to back Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in his battle against various rebel groups. Israel, while largely staying out of the war, maintains close contact with the Russians to avoid any clashes between the two countries' air forces.

Obama administration denies allowing 'secret' exemptions in Iran deal

Foreign Policy, 01.09.2016



Obama administration denied claims by a former U.N. weapons inspector on Thursday that the United States and other countries agreed to allow Iran to evade restrictions in last year's historic nuclear deal.

“There has been no loosening of Iran’s commitments and there have been no exceptions given,” said State Department spokesman John Kirby at a daily press conference. The comments came in response to a new paper by the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security.

The report claims that the United States and other countries granted Iran exemptions regarding certain aspects of the nuclear deal so that Tehran would be eligible to receive relief from punishing economic sanctions earlier this year.

David Albright, the president of the organization and co-author of the study who has often voiced skepticism over provisions of the nuclear deal, says his findings are based on interviews with government officials but he declined to name them. The alleged exemptions included allowing Iran to exceed limits on how much low-enriched uranium (LEU) it can store in its nuclear facilities, the study claimed.

LEU stockpiles are monitored because they can be purified into weapons-grade uranium. The study said that the exemptions were made by the joint commission tasked with overseeing implementation of the deal — a body comprised of the P5+1 and Iran.



“The Joint Commission’s secretive decision making process risks advantaging Iran by allowing it to try to systematically weaken the [Iran deal],” said the study. Republican critics of the deal, including Ohio Sen. Rob Portman and House Majority Whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana, immediately seized on the study, calling it an “alarming” example of the Obama administration hiding details of the deal from the American people.

But the Obama administration flatly denied the the group’s claims. Kirby said the Iran deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, set the limit of low-enriched uranium at 300 kilograms and since implementation day, “Iran has been in compliance with holding to that limit.”

Albright’s report also said the joint commission allowed Iran to keep 19 functioning radiation containment chambers that are larger than provided for under the deal. The chambers, or “hot cells,” are made for handling radioactive material but the report says they can be “misused for secret, mostly small-scale plutonium separation efforts.”

Kirby said that the text of the Iran deal explicitly permits Iran to use larger hot cells if approved by the joint commission. “Iran has been in full compliance of their JCPOA commitments,” he said.

Ever since the Iran nuclear negotiations became public, Albright has offered criticisms of certain aspects of the agreement, but remained neutral on whether or not it should be implemented. His study claims that the exemptions given to Iran were made so that it would meet a deadline to start receiving economic sanctions relief. Non-proliferation groups and arms control experts have largely been supportive of the deal and some openly dismissed the report.

“It is a bridge too far to call this a secret exemption necessary to reach implementation day,” Kelsey Davenport, director of non-proliferation policy at the Arms Control Association, told Foreign Policy. She also defended the joint commission as a necessary component to a complex agreement that involves an array of technical issues.

“The Joint Commission was created in part to address implementation issues and distinguish between attempts to circumvent the deal’s limits and technical issues,” she said. Experts said there is nothing clandestine about the joint commission — which is made up of the major powers that signed the deal along with Tehran — working out details on how to carry it out, especially given that Congress was briefed on those details.

“Every nuclear agreement has had confidential annexes,” said Jim Walsh, a contributor with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, and a research associate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s security studies program.

The text of the 2003 agreement in which Libya agreed to give up its nuclear weapons has never been released and key provisions in arms control deals with the Soviets were kept secret and classified, Walsh said.

“Every nuclear agreement has had confidential annexes,” he said. “If countries had to negotiate their nuclear particulars in front of television cameras, we would have no nuclear agreements,” he said.

The report seemed to imply that the Obama administration should have shared more information about the implementation details with Albright and other experts in the think tank and academic community.

In that case, that would represent a criticism about how the White House handled its public relations for the deal, but it would not constitute a “secret” arrangement with Iran that violated the spirit of the accord, said Richard Nephew, who was on the U.S. negotiating team for the Iran agreement and is now a fellow at Columbia University’s Center on Global Energy.

The report failed to make the case that something secret or covert had taken place, he said. “There’s no allegation there that this wasn’t briefed to Congress,” Nephew told FP. “I find it hard to see anything nefarious in what went on here.”

Austria threatens to sue Hungary for refusing to take migrants back

Hurriyet Daily News, 07.09.2016



Austria’s interior minister threatened to sue Hungary if it refused to take back migrants who had crossed their shared border, as political tensions mounted over immigration before presidential elections.

Austria’s government has repeatedly accused Hungary of letting migrants enter its territory in the face of EU rules that asylum seekers must stay in the first country they enter in the bloc. Hungary, itself preparing for a referendum on whether to accept a Europe-wide asylum quota, has insisted that most refugees enter its territory from other EU states, notably Italy and Greece, in a growing blame game.

“States or groups of states that permanently break the law have to expect legal consequences,” Interior Minister Wolfgang Sobotka told ORF radio, responding to a question on Hungary’s refusal to give ground.

“In that case, the [Austrian] republic must sue. The republic must see that the European Union acts according to the law, full stop,” he added, without specifying what legal process he was considering. Budapest built a fence along its border with non-EU member Serbia to stem the flow of hundreds of thousands of people, many of them fleeing violence in the Middle East and North Africa. Both Hungary and Austria had said this month the situation was now broadly under control. A Hungarian government spokesman dismissed Sobotka’s call in an emailed statement, saying the vast majority of migrants had arrived in other EU states first. “Hungary cannot and will not take responsibility for, and suffer the consequences of, the irresponsible conduct of other member states - Austria, Germany - which expressly suggested ignoring the rules, or for other states - Greece - that neglected to do their job,” the spokesman said.

Germany and Austria initially welcomed large numbers of refugees from the Middle East and Afghanistan. However, Vienna started to toughen its asylum rules earlier this year and introduced an annual limit on the number of asylum requests it accepts.

Those steps, widely criticized by human rights groups and the European Union, came after support for the far-right Freedom Party (FPO) in opinion polls surged ahead of the ruling centrist parties. FPO candidate Norbert Gerwald is standing to become Europe's first far-right head of state in presidential elections on Oct. 2, the same day as the Hungarian referendum.

Germany's anti-migrant populists beat Merkel's party in local vote

Reuters, 05.09.2016



German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) were beaten into third place by the anti-immigrant and anti-Islam Alternative for Germany (AfD) party in a north-eastern state election

The xenophobic AfD clinched around 21 percent in its first bid for seats in the regional parliament of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, results showed after most ballots were counted, AFP reported. Merkel's CDU garnered just 19 percent in its worst ever score in the north-eastern state, while the Social Democrats (SPD) maintained top place with around 30 percent.

AfD's lead candidate Leif-Erik Holm called it a "proud result for a young party" as the populists secured seats on the opposition benches of the ninth out of 16 regional parliaments with the showing.

"The icing on the cake is that we have left Merkel's CDU behind us... maybe that is the beginning of the end of Merkel's time as chancellor," he said. Although the former Communist state is Germany's poorest and least populous, it carries a symbolic meaning as it is home to Merkel's constituency Stralsund.

Together with Berlin's elections in two weeks, the Sept. 4 polls are a key test ahead of general elections next year, when Merkel's decision exactly a year ago to let in tens of thousands of Syrian and other migrants is expected to be a key point of contention. Merkel said that she was unhappy about the results of the election but added her refugee policies have been right all along.

Merkel acknowledged her pro-refugee position in the last year had a lot to do with her conservative party's drubbing in the votes. "I'm very unsatisfied with the outcome of the election," Reuters quoted Merkel as saying. "Obviously it has something to do with the refugee question. But I nevertheless believe the decisions made were right and we have to continue to work on them."

Meanwhile, the number of migrants claiming German welfare benefits soared by 169 percent last year, data showed, a figure likely to further boost anti-immigrant groups such as the AfD. Around 975,000 migrants were receiving benefits in accordance with the Act on Benefits for Asylum Seekers at the end of 2015, the Federal Statistics Office said. That marked the sixth consecutive yearly rise and compared with 363,000 in 2014.

This data include migrants with temporary residence permits and those who cannot be deported for the time being. They do not include those with refugee status or those entitled to asylum, who receive social benefits if they need help.

North Korea claims ‘successful’ nuclear warhead test

Foreign Policy, 31.08.2016



North Korea claimed it has successfully tested a nuclear warhead that could be mounted on a missile, drawing condemnation from the South over the “maniacal recklessness” of young ruler Kim Jong-Un.

The blast at the Punggye-ri nuclear site was the North’s fifth and most powerful yet at 10 kilotons -- approaching the might of the bomb that devastated Hiroshima, experts said. Pyongyang’s media said the test, which comes after a series of ballistic missile launches that have drawn international condemnation and UN sanctions, had achieved its goal of being able to fit a miniaturized nuclear warhead on a rocket.

“Our nuclear scientists staged a nuclear explosion test on a newly developed nuclear warhead at the country’s northern nuclear test site,” a North Korean TV presenter said. “Our... party sent a congratulatory message to our nuclear scientists... for conducting the successful nuclear warhead explosion test,” said Ri Chun-Hee, a veteran who has delivered all the North’s biggest announcements.

The news drew swift condemnation from US President Barack Obama who warned of “serious consequences” and said he had called the leaders of South Korea and Japan to confer over the crisis.

The South’s President Park Geun-Hye spoke out against the “maniacal recklessness” of Kim, who since taking control after the death of his father in 2011 has carried out a series of purges and weapons tests designed to show strength and consolidate power. “Kim Jong-Un’s regime will only earn more sanctions and isolation... and such provocation will further accelerate its path to self-destruction,” Park said, warning his obsession with creating a nuclear arsenal posed a grave challenge.



“We will step up pressure on the North by using all possible measures, including more, stronger sanctions on the North with the international community and at the UN Security Council,” she said. News of the test emerged when seismic monitors detected a 5.3-magnitude “artificial earthquake” near the Punggye-ri nuclear site, where the last test took place in January. “The 10-kiloton blast was nearly twice the fourth nuclear test and slightly less than the Hiroshima bombing, which was measured about 15 kilotons,” said Kim Nam-Wook from the South’s meteorological agency.

If Pyongyang can make a nuclear device small enough to fit on a warhead, and bolster the range and accuracy of its missiles, it might achieve its oft-stated aim of hitting US targets. But its claims to that in the past have been discounted. Scientists will now attempt to analyse the blast to try to determine what kind of a breakthrough it represents, including whether it is a standard atomic bomb or a more powerful hydrogen, or thermonuclear, bomb.

But verifying the claim to have created a weapon-tipped missile will be difficult, said Melissa Hanham, a North Korea expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. “It’s not really possible for us to verify that the test was of a compact warhead from the seismic data,” she told AFP. “We would need to see it tested on a missile like China did in the 1960s. Nobody wants to see that. There is no way they could do that test in a safe way, and it could easily start a war.”

Japan condemned the move as “absolutely unacceptable” while the head of the UN atomic watchdog said it was a “clear violation” of numerous Security Council resolutions. North Korea has been hit by five sets of United Nations sanctions since it first tested a nuclear device in 2006, but has insisted it will continue, arguing it faces an existential threat from US aggression.

A series of ballistic missile launches has also drawn intense criticism, with another three fired on Monday even as world powers gathered for a G20 meeting in China. Nuclear tests are usually heralded by chatter among analysts about preparations at Punggye-ri, but this time observers were largely caught off guard, said Kim Jin-Moo from the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses.

“The test has been carefully planned out for months by the North to maximise the impact of the show of force to the international community,” he told AFP. The nuclear test is another slap in the face to the North’s chief ally China which has been under pressure to rein in its increasingly embarrassing behavior.

China said it “firmly opposes” the test but it has limited room to manoeuvre, given its priority is to avoid a collapse of the regime that would create a crisis on its border and shift the balance of power on the Korean peninsula towards the US.

The US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University, which had warned Thursday of “new activity” at Punggye-ri, said the latest development made plain that the US and South Korean strategy on restraining North Korea “has clearly failed”.

“No one should be surprised that North Korea continues to conduct nuclear tests to enhance the capabilities of its growing arsenal. Nor should they expect China to solve this problem for the United States,” said the institute’s Joel Wit. North Korea claimed its January test was of a miniaturised hydrogen bomb, which can be far more powerful than other nuclear devices.

But scientists say the estimated yield of around six kilotons was similar to the North's previous nuclear test in 2013, and far too low for a thermonuclear device. Initial indications from Monday's blast pointed in the same direction.

"What we can tell from the seismic waves so far is that this is likely not a thermonuclear test," said 38 North managing director Jenny Town. "We are still in the preliminary stages but our analysts believe they tested a basic nuclear device not an advanced device," she said. "If we were looking at a thermonuclear test, we would see very different seismic waves."

Trump says Putin better leader than Obama

Hurriyet Daily News, 08.09.2016



Donald Trump declared that Russian President Putin had been a better leader than U.S. President Obama, as the Republican presidential nominee used a forum to argue he was best equipped to reassert America's global leadership.

"If he says great things about me, I'm going to say great things about him," Trump said of the Russian president at NBC's "Commander-in-Chief" forum in New York attended by military veterans, where he and Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton made back-to-back appearances. "It's a very different system, and I don't happen to like the system.

But certainly in that system he's been a leader, far more than our president has been a leader." Trump had called Obama "the founder of ISIS," an acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in stump speeches several weeks ago.

The statement drew broad criticism, prompting him to take a more disciplined approach to campaigning. He has since picked up ground on Clinton in national opinion polls. Trump suggested that U.S. generals had been stymied by the policies of Obama and Clinton, who served as the Democratic president's first secretary of state.

"I think under the leadership of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton the generals have been reduced to rubble. They have been reduced to a point that's embarrassing for our country," Trump said. It was the first time Trump and Clinton had squared off on the same stage since accepting their parties' presidential nominations in July for the Nov. 8 election.

Clinton was grilled over her handling of classified information while using a private email server during her tenure at the State Department. FBI Director James Comey had declared her "extremely careless" in her handling of sensitive material but did not recommend charges against her. "I did exactly what I should have done and I take it very seriously, always have, always will," she said.



The event offered a prelude to how Clinton and Trump will deal with questions on national security issues in their three upcoming presidential debates later in September and in October. Clinton began the forum saying her long experience in government as a U.S. senator and secretary of state made her uniquely qualified to serve as president.

She said she had “an absolute rock steadiness” to be able to make tough decisions, a not so subtle dig at Trump, who Democrats say is temperamentally unfit for the White House. Moderator Matt Lauer doggedly pressed her about her handling of emails from a private server while secretary of state from 2009 to 2013. The issue has raised questions about whether she can be trusted to serve as president. Clinton said none of the emails she sent or received were marked top secret, secret or classified, the usual way such material is identified.



Announcements & Reports

What Are The Prerequisites For A Euro-Area Fiscal Capacity?

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2016/09/what-are-the-prerequisites-for-a-euro-area-fiscal-capacity/>

The Missile Defense Agency and the Color of Money

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <https://www.csis.org/analysis/missile-defense-agency-and-color-money>

The Hangzhou G20 Summit: The Ambiguous Gap Between Aspiration and Action

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hangzhou-g20-summit-ambiguous-gap-between-aspiration-and-action>

Upcoming Events

Congo's Political Crisis: What is The Way Forward?

Date : 09 September 2016
Place : Washington DC, USA
Website : <https://www.brookings.edu/events/congos-political-crisis-what-is-the-way-forward/>

Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union

Date : 15 September 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/534-competitive-gains-in-the-economic-and-monetary-union/>

The Future of Capitalist Democracy: UK-Japan Perspectives

Date : 16 September 2016
Place : London - UK
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>

13th Asia Europe Economic Forum (AEEF)

Date : 21 – 22 September 2016
Place : Beijing - China
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/13th-asia-europe-economic-forum/>



Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?

Date : 23 September 2016
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/524-emerging-markets-and-europe-time-for-different-relationships/>

What future for Europe's Social Models?

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

Challenges for Growth in Europe

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

Global Governance of Public Goods: Asian and European Perspectives

Date : 28 September 2016
Place : Paris - France
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/529-global-governance-of-public-goods-asian-and-european-perspectives/>

The Future of the Welfare State

Date : 30 September 2016
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 : 21 – 22 November 2016
Place : Lisbon - Portugal
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/vision-europe-summit-2016/>