

Turkey, EU officials to meet in Brussels to discuss migrant deal

Hurriyet Daily News, 25.11.2016



Officials from Turkey and the European Union will meet on in Brussels to discuss the implementation of a migrant deal and prospective visa liberalization for Turkish nationals, amid mutual recriminations about the state of the Ankara-Brussels relationship.

Turkish EU Minister Ömer Çelik is scheduled to meet the EU Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans, EU Commissioner for Migration Dimitris Avramopoulos, EU Commissioner for Security Julian King and EU Commissioner for Energy Miguel Arias Canete, Turkey's EU ministry said in a statement.

Çelik is expected to discuss recent developments on Turkey-EU ties as well as the fight against terrorism, migration, visa liberalization, global climate and energy with his counterparts in Brussels. He will also chair Turkey-EU civil society meetings in Brussels which are set to be held with the participation of the Turkish and European press, civil society, academics and business representatives. Çelik is also expected to deliver a speech at the Education in Emergencies Forum, which is being organized by the European Commission to raise awareness on education for migrants.

Turkish President: Israeli-Turkish normalization of utmost importance for entire region

Hurriyet Daily News, 25.11.2016



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has stressed the importance of normalization between Israel and Turkey in a phone conversation with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin.

“The normalization of the relations between Turkey and Israel is of the utmost importance for the whole region,” Erdoğan said. “I know that we can keep working together in the domain of natural gas and that the conversations between our energy ministries will bear fruit,” Erdoğan told Rivlin, according to a statement issued by the Israeli president’s press office. The phone conversation was initiated by Israel to thank Turkey for sending firefighting aircraft.

Erdoğan said relations between Turkey and Israel were being renewed and that a new Turkish ambassador would soon begin his assignment, the statement read. Rivlin told Erdoğan that he had met the Turkish firefighter pilots who assisted in Israel.

“They do wonderful work and we very much appreciate all they do,” he said. “I want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your decision to send us help when we needed it in fighting the fires. With their brave hearts and abilities, your pilots assisted us greatly.”

Erdoğan thanked Rivlin for his words and said, “As soon as I found out that the fire was spreading, I requested that we send our helicopters and teams to help, and I hope and pray that the mission will end with the best outcome possible.”

Toward the end of their conversation, Erdoğan asked Rivlin about recent moves to ban the call to prayer in Israel, said the statement. Rivlin said would be “considered with sensitivity, as any matter of freedom of speech and religion should be.”

Israel’s president thanked Erdoğan again for their conversation, and asked that he would do all in his power to assist in the return of the bodies of two soldiers, Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, currently being held in Gaza so that they can receive a proper burial in Israel, according to the statement.

Rivlin stressed that the state of Israel would continue to allow each person freedom of religion, whether they were Muslim, Christian or Jewish. The two presidents ended their conversation expressing their hope of speaking again soon, said the statement.

A strong wind whipped up forest and bush fires across Israel and the West Bank on Nov. 24, causing the worst rash of fires since 2010 when the country suffered the single deadliest wildfire in history.

Israel accepted Turkey's offer of firefighting aircraft to help combat the blaze. The assistance from Turkey came amid recent rapprochement between Turkey and Israel. Relations crumbled after Israeli marines stormed an activist ship carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza in May 2010, killing 10 Turkish people on board. Israel later apologized for the 2010 raid on the Mavi Marmara activist ship, paying out \$20 million to the bereaved and injured.

'Know your limits,' Erdoğan tells European Parliament

Anadolu Agency, 27.11.2016



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told the European Parliament to know its "limits", which came after a non-binding motion passed last week in the European Parliament that urged a freeze in the European Union's accession talks with Turkey.

"Saying 'don't fight terrorism' to a country who fights against terror every day is to tell them to put up the shutters. Are you inviting terrorist groups?" he said. Adopted by 479 votes in favor, the EP's motion decided for "the [European] Commission and the member states to initiate a temporary freeze of the ongoing accession negotiations with Turkey."

In the motion, members of the European Parliament strongly condemned the "disproportionate repressive measures" taken by the Turkish government since the July 15 failed coup attempt and said it "violates basic rights and freedoms protected by the Turkish Constitution."

"The government and parliament can extend the length of the state of emergency. What's it to you? Does the European Parliament rule this country or the government [of Turkey]? Know your limits! Those days are over," Erdoğan said. Turkey is in its second three-month term of its state of emergency that came after the foiled coup attempt and a series of terror attacks.

Erdoğan said Turkey would continue to "go its way no matter what they say," in accordance with its centennial independence anniversary ambitions of 2023. Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım also urged European leaders to "decide on whom to cooperate with," demanding them to make a choice between his country and "terrorist groups." "First of all, the EU should decide on whether it will ally with Turkey or terrorist organizations that are freely wandering around Europe. The Turkish nation is waiting for this [decision]. You will always say that 'Turkey is key for Europe's security' but then will ally with terrorist organizations that are trying to dissolve Turkey. We will never accept this," he said at the Istanbul Health Expo.

“Bear in mind that Turkey is a country that welcomes and provides a safe haven for millions of refugees fleeing their homes due to the human tragedy in Syria and Iraq. Watch what would have happened in Europe if Turkey had not protected these refugees. Humanity is in Turkey. Turkey is the country where humanity has not died.”

Yıldırım also said the EU would not care about the European Parliament’s decision to call for a freeze in talks for his country’s accession to the bloc. “I hope there still are leaders in Europe who will not want to damage half a century old EU-Turkey relations,” he added.

Meanwhile, another statement on the issue came from the president of the European Commission, who said that Turkey should heed EU warnings over halting membership talks and carry out reforms demanded by the bloc. Jean-Claude Juncker said the European Parliament’s vote to suspend talks with Ankara should not be underestimated because, although not binding, “it will produce effects in the capitals,” of EU states that decide on membership.

Speaking to Belgian newspaper La Libre Belgique, Juncker also dismissed President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s threats to end a refugee deal with the EU that has sharply reduced the flow of migrants to Europe from the Middle East and Asia. He urged Erdoğan to carry out necessary reforms, starting with an overhaul of anti-terrorism legislation, if he wants Turkish citizens to get visa-free travel to the EU - a concession that is part of the refugee deal.

Erdoğan: Turkey will ‘open up border gates’ if EU goes further

Hurriyet Daily News, 25.11.2016



Turkey will open up its border gates and let refugees stream toward Europe “if the EU goes further,” President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has threatened in the wake of a European Parliament vote on Nov. 24 to temporarily freeze accession talks with Ankara.

“Some 30-40 votes for ‘no’ and 400-500 votes for ‘yes.’ What would happen if all of you voted ‘yes?’ You never treated humanity honestly and you did not look after people fairly. You did not pick up babies when they washed ashore on the Mediterranean. We are the ones who are feeding around 3.5 million refugees in this country,” Erdoğan said.

“You did not keep your promises. When 50,000 refugees turned up at the Kapıkule [border gate] you cried out and began to say ‘What will we do when Turkey opens the border gates?’ Look, if you go further, those border gates will be opened. You should know that,” he said. Noting that threats against people would not work, Erdoğan invoked his oft-repeated refrain that the “world is bigger than five,” referring to the U.N. Security Council’s permanent members.



“The world is bigger than five. We need to defend that, but we shouldn’t be afraid of some people. We can’t applaud cruelty in order to look nice to someone,” he also said. During his speech, Erdoğan stressed that Turkey would not “collapse because of sanctions.” “Are the ones who have been keeping the doors of the EU closed for 53 years imposing sanctions? What if they do? Are we finished; will we collapse? These sanctions won’t cause us to collapse. We will stand straight and continue on our way. Don’t forget, the West needs Turkey,” he added.

Noting that Turkey was sheltering millions of refugees, Erdoğan said: “Turkey didn’t think about whether it would receive money from EU while doing that. The amount that came from the U.N. is 500 million dollars. The number is 700 when it comes to the EU. How much did we spend? Fifteen billion dollars. There are lots of crises that threaten humanity. I will stress one point. If there wasn’t a refugee crisis, believe me, the humanitarian plights in those countries would go nearly unnoticed.”

EU lawmakers called for a temporary halt to Turkey’s accession talks because of what they called Ankara’s “disproportionate” reaction to July’s failed coup that has included a massive crackdown on the country’s opposition.

Turkish authorities have detained or dismissed tens of thousands of people over their alleged backing for the coup, in what the opposition, some rights groups and some Western allies say is an attempt to crush all dissent.

Members of the European Parliament voted 479 to 37 in favor of the non-binding motion urging the European Commission and national governments to implement what lawmakers acknowledge would be a largely symbolic freeze in negotiations that have been going on for 11 years but have long been stalled.

Under a deal clinched in March, Turkey agreed to take back illegal migrants and refugees leaving its shores for Greece in return for aid and visa-free travel for Turks in Europe. The deal has slashed the number of migrants reaching the EU, but the visa-free deal has not been implemented due to Turkey’s anti-terror law.

Turkish jets hit ISIL near Syria's Al-Bab after one week hiatus

Reuters, 21.11.2016



Turkish Air Forces warplanes hit the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in northern Syria after a one-week hiatus, one day after a Turkish soldier was killed in an ISIL attack in the region.

The planes hit targets in Bzaghah, Qabasin, Suflaniyah and the north of Al-Bab, a key town held by ISIL, as part of the “Euphrates Shield” operation. It destroyed four buildings used as headquarters by ISIL militants, the Turkish military said in a written statement. The last time Turkey made air strikes in Syria was Nov. 12, in which the military said 18 ISIL militants were killed near Al-Bab.

No jets had entered Syrian air space since after the Syrian regime activated its air defenses and threatened to shoot down any Turkish jets. According to sources, the Turkish military started using its jets again in the operation targeting ISIL following a series of meetings with Russian military officials.

As the Turkish military continued to back the Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces in northern Syria, one Turkish soldier was killed and two others wounded in a bomb attack by ISIL militants near Al-Bab. The three soldiers were evacuated alive by helicopter and taken to the southern Turkish province of Gaziantep, but one of them died from his injuries, the sources said.

Turkey launched an incursion into Syria in August, sending in warplanes, tanks and special forces in support of largely Turkmen and Arab FSA forces to drive ISIL and Kurdish militants away from its border. Turkish artillery hit both ISIL and YPG targets over the weekend. According to the military, the shelling targeted 79 ISIL targets and five targets belonging to the Syrian Kurdish YPG, the military wing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD).

A number of shelters, command centers, arms and vehicles belonging to ISIL and the YPG were destroyed in the shelling, the military added. The YPG is an ally of the United States in its fight against ISIL and is not recognized as a terrorist organization by most of the international community. Ankara denounces the YPG as an affiliate of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Pentagon: ‘Senior al-Qaeda leader’ killed in US strike in Syria

AFP, 23.11.2016



A U.S. drone strike has killed a senior al-Qaeda leader in Syria who previously operated in Afghanistan, the U.S. Defense Department announced on Nov. 22.

The Nov. 18 strike near Sarmada in northwestern Syria targeted Abu Afghan al-Masri, Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said.

“He had ties to terrorist groups operating throughout Southwest Asia, including groups responsible for attacking U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan and those plotting to attack the West,” Cook said.

Al-Masri was an Egyptian who originally joined al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and later moved to its Syrian affiliate, Cook said. The Pentagon did not immediately provide further information about Masri, only that he had a “senior leadership role” in al-Qaeda. “This is someone who helped organize al-Qaeda activities,” Cook said.

He “has been on our radar for some time.” A U.S.-led coalition is striking the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) targets in Syria, but has also hit leaders from other groups including the al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front, which has renamed itself Fatah al-Sham. In October, the Pentagon said a U.S. air strike near Idlib had targeted a Nusra senior leader, Ahmed Salama Mabrouk, an Egyptian also known by his nom de guerre Abu Faraj.

Brexit: Theresa May faces new legal challenge to keep Britain in the single market over little-known Article 127

Independent, 25.11.2016



Theresa May faces the headache of a second legal challenge over Brexit – this time over the barely-known Article 127. Pro-EU campaigners will argue Britain will not leave the European Economic Area automatically when it leaves the EU itself.

The think tank British Influence is writing to Brexit Secretary David Davis to argue Parliament should decide, in a mirror image over the battle to trigger the Article 50 exit notice. The government will argue EEA membership ends when Britain leaves the EU. But, if the courts back the legal challenge and give Parliament the final say over EEA membership, MPs could potentially vote to ensure Britain stays in the market.

They could argue for membership until a long-term trading relationship with the EU has been agreed, something expected to take far longer than the 2019 exit date. More MPs would feel able to do this than oppose leaving the EU outright, because the referendum question only asked about membership of the EU - not of the single market.

At the very least, the latest challenge would mean a lengthy legal process - potentially via the European Court of Justice - that could delay the government's Article 50 negotiations with the EU. Professor George Yarrow, emeritus professor at Hertford College, Oxford, told the BBC: "There is no provision in the EEA Agreement for UK membership to lapse if the UK withdraws from the EU.

"The only exit mechanism specified is Article 127, which would need to be triggered." Jonathan Lis, deputy director for British Influence, said: "There is a strong chance that the UK will be acting unlawfully by taking us out of the EEA with Brexit.

"We consider that they have an obligation to seek urgent clarification in the courts. So we are going to be petitioning for a judicial review." But Conservative MP and Brexiteer Dominic Raab said: "Rather than coming up with new legal wheezes to try and frustrate the will of the people, these lawyers should be working with us to make a success of Brexit.

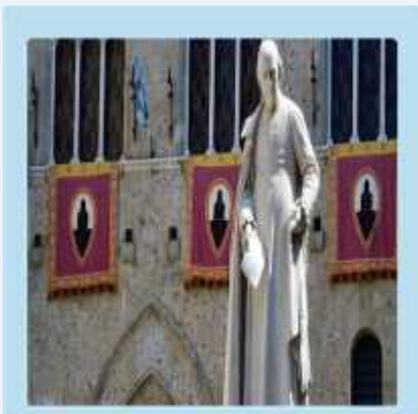
"The public have spoken; we should respect the result and get on with it, not try to find new hurdles that undermine the democratic process." Pro-Europeans see the single market as crucial to economic success, because it allows the tariff-free movement of goods, services, money and people within the EU. The EEA was set up in the 1990s to extend those benefits to some non-EU members including Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Non-EU members are outside the Common Agricultural Policy and customs union, but enjoy barrier-free trade in return for paying into some EU budgets and accepting the free movement of workers. A government spokesman dismissed the challenge, saying:

“As the UK is party to the EEA Agreement only in its capacity as an EU Member State, once we leave the European Union we will automatically cease to be a member of the EEA. “The referendum result will be respected and we intend to invoke Article 50 no later than the end of March next year.” The separate fight over the government’s right to trigger Article 50 reaches the Supreme Court next week, with a verdict early in the New Year.

Germany: EU shouldn’t freeze accession talks with Turkey

AFP, 25.11.2016



The European Union should not freeze Turkey’s negotiations to join the bloc, Germany’s Foreign Ministry said on Nov. 25, a day after members of the European Parliament voted in a non-binding motion in support of such a freeze.

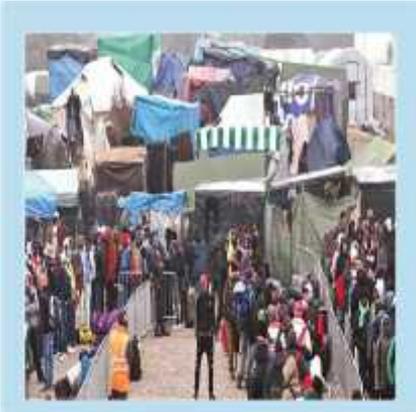
“It is important that we keep talking,” Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Sawsan Chebli told a regular government news conference. “It is important that we do not freeze the accession negotiations because that would only further damage the relationship between Turkey and Europe, and that would not be in the interest of Turkey or of Europe,” she added.

Chebli said the EU’s migrant deal with Turkey remained in the interest of both sides. “If one looks at the facts, then it is the case that both sides are sticking to the agreement and we hope that remains the case as it is in the interests of both sides,” she said.

“We see the EU-Turkey agreement... as a success for both sides. And the continuation of this agreement is in the interest of all parties,” Chancellor Angela Merkel’s spokeswoman, Ulrike Demmer, said. “The EU stands by its commitments under the agreement and is meeting its commitments. Threats on either side are not helpful now,” she added. “Where there are difficulties, we need to resolve them.”

EU approves Ukraine visa-free travel

AFP, 18.11.2016



European Union member states on Nov. 17 approved visa-free travel for Ukraine citizens, long sought by Kiev to help cement ties as it combats pro-Russian rebels in the east. Visa-free travel was part of an EU-Ukraine partnership accord signed in 2014 as the country, a Soviet-era satellite, angered Moscow by casting its lot with the West.

In return for closer ties, the EU has demanded civil society reforms to root out corruption and ensure rights and democratic standards match in the bloc. A statement said the EU had agreed visa-free travel for EU and Ukraine citizens for stays of not more than 90 days in any 180-day period.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko wrote on Twitter he welcomed this “long-awaited decision” and called on the EU to introduce the visa-free regime “without further delay.” “Credible reform is the right path and should be encouraged,” Peter Javorcik, Slovak ambassador to the EU and whose country currently holds the bloc’s six-month rotating presidency, said in the statement.

“I am also delighted that our decision is able to send a positive message in the run up to the EU-Ukraine Summit,” Javorcik added. The proposal now goes to the European Parliament for approval. The Ukraine crisis has plunged EU ties with Russia into a deep freeze, with Brussels imposing a whole series of economic and other sanctions against Moscow for supporting the rebels and over its annexation of Crimea.

EU’s granting of visa-free travel to Ukrainian citizens comes amid the ongoing crisis between Turkey and the EU. The EU promised visa-free travel for Turkish citizens until October in exchange for a much-debated migrant deal but has yet to implement the visa liberalization process, citing Turkey’s lack of fulfilling some of the remaining 72 criteria, which also includes an amendment in Ankara’s anti-terror law.

Trump's team could bring 9/11 mindset back to the White House

Hurriyet Daily News, 14.11.2016



President-elect Donald Trump's choices for his national security team would return 9/11-era policies to the White House and back an all-out war on Islamist terrorists that will alarm U.S. allies, raise the risk of confrontation with Iran, and potentially jeopardize civil liberties at home.

The appointments unveiled Friday — with Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn as national security advisor, Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) as attorney general, and Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-Kan.) as CIA director — represent a sharp U-turn. George W. Bush's administration declared a no-holds-barred “war on terror” to justify expanded presidential powers.

Trump's new team offers plenty of echoes: Pompeo has defended the use of waterboarding, Sessions has argued federal agents' shouldn't be limited in their use of other “enhanced interrogation techniques,” and Flynn has decried military rules designed to avoid civilian deaths as limitations that are crippling U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Although Flynn's appointment does not require confirmation from the Senate, the nominees for attorney general and CIA director will have to win approval from fellow lawmakers, and swift confirmation is by no means assured in the current fraught political climate following Trump's upset victory last week.

The president-elect ran against the Republican establishment and cannot count on unconditional support from the GOP majority in Congress, and Democrats have already vowed to block the Trump administration if it endangers civil rights enshrined in the Constitution.

Sessions's nomination will come under close scrutiny due to confirmation controversies in the senator's past over his racially tinged comments and over fears that he might make good on Trump's threats to prosecute his Democratic opponent in the election, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Flynn displays a single-minded focus on the danger he claims is posed by “radical Islam” — a threat he compares to that represented by Nazi Germany in World War II. He argues that the United States must fully commit to combating and defeating the Islamic State, and other extremists backed by anti-U.S. regimes, and has accused President Barack Obama of tying the hands of the military in the field, appeasing Iran, and failing to recognize the magnitude of the danger facing the country. “We're in a world war, but very few Americans recognize it,” Flynn wrote in his book released this year, *The Field of Fight*. “[W]e have to energize every element of national power in a cohesive synchronized manner—similar to the effort during World War II or the Cold War—to effectively resource what will likely be a multigenerational struggle.”



Flynn's visceral response to the threat of terrorism recalls the Bush administration's answer to 9/11 — the invasion of Iraq, the embrace of torture and unlawful detention, the curtailment of civil liberties — that deeply damaged America's standing in the world and hamstrung U.S. efforts to fight terrorism. Obama, who won the 2008 election vowing to restore America's tarnished reputation and who pledged to close the military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and end torture, said in his first inaugural address: "Our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint."

The new administration's apparent monolithic focus on countering terrorism, to the near-exclusion of other security challenges facing the United States, threatens to inflict additional lasting damage. The Trump team's close ties with and affinity for Russia, in particular, coupled with a narrow focus on the fight against Islamist terrorists, could give Moscow a free hand as it redraws the map in Europe and seeks to restore its lost Soviet-era great-power status.

Likewise, the new administration's narrow focus risks pulling the plug on the already wheezing U.S. pivot to Asia, potentially ceding to China economic and diplomatic — even, perhaps, military — dominance in Asia.

In describing a global war against a network of extremists, Flynn has blasted the Obama administration for failing to embrace "friendly tyrannies" like the regime of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak — ousted in 2011 — that oppose Islamist extremists. And Flynn has cheered Egypt's new strongman, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who as a general took power after toppling the country's elected president.

Flynn has described Russia as a partner in the fight against terrorism — he's worked for a Kremlin-backed news outlet and sat next to Russian President Vladimir Putin at a gala — and portrayed the struggle as a life-and-death battle reminiscent of Bush's famous warning to governments after 9/11: "You're either with us or against us in the fight against terror."

Some Democrats in Congress expressed grave concern over Friday's appointments and said Flynn had shown a readiness to overlook Russia's military aggression in Ukraine and its provocative intervention in Syria in support of Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Flynn has "demonstrated the same fondness for the autocratic and belligerent Kremlin which animate President-elect Trump's praise of Vladimir Putin," Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), the ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee, said in a statement. Schiff added the next president would be better served by an advisor with a "healthy skepticism" about Moscow.

As friendly as they are toward Russia, Flynn and other Trump national security nominees talk tough on Iran, in particular with what they see as Tehran's role in underwriting Islamist terrorism around the world.

In his book, Flynn wrote: "[W]e must decisively confront the state and non-state supporters and enablers of this violent Islamist ideology and compel them to end their support to our enemies or be prepared to remove their capacity to do so." His co-author, conservative commentator Michael Ledeen, has long advocated regime change in Tehran and traces virtually all terrorist threats back to Iran.



Flynn has excoriated the Iran nuclear deal, inked in 2015, as “wishful thinking,” and he shares the view of Republican lawmakers that the United States needs to take a more assertive stance with Tehran, rather than pursue a diplomatic thaw.

The Trump team’s rhetoric on Iran, coupled with comments by Republicans in Congress, has dismayed European allies that worked on the nuclear deal, which imposed constraints on Tehran’s nuclear program in return for easing some economic sanctions. European diplomats told Foreign Policy they are worried that an aggressive approach to Iran could backfire, prompting Tehran to redouble its bid for nuclear weapons.

James Jeffrey, a deputy national security advisor under George W. Bush and later an ambassador to Iraq and Turkey in the Obama administration, said Pompeo and Sessions share a “classic Republican, Bush administration worldview” that followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks. But Flynn, Jeffrey said, “goes beyond that by seeing essentially no threat to the United States beyond this quote ‘Islamic terror.’”

Flynn “inflates that threat from a serious problem to an existential danger to the country and a conflict that we will be in for generations, as if it were the Cold War,” said Jeffrey, also a frequent Obama critic since leaving government and an FP contributor. “This is totally wrong, and it undercuts any rational discussion of the arguably more significant threats to the global order that Russia, China, and to some degree Iran are posing.”

Obama’s disavowal of torture early in his administration served as an important symbolic repudiation of Bush-era abuses in the aftermath of 9/11. Trump’s new national security team has flirted with turning back the clock on those reforms, moves that would damage America’s moral standing in the world.

In an interview with Yahoo News in July, Flynn refused to rule out a possible return to waterboarding and other tactics widely condemned as torture. As a senator, Sessions voted against a measure to ban the so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques” that included beatings, waterboarding, sleep deprivation, and exposure to extreme temperatures.

Trump’s pick to run the CIA, Pompeo, has linked Obama’s torture reforms with what he believes is a weak approach to the war on terror. “President Obama has continually refused to take the war on radical Islamic terrorism seriously — from ending our interrogation program in 2009 to trying to close Guantánamo Bay,” Pompeo said in 2014.

Congress later enacted legislation reinforcing the prohibition on the use of torture signed by Obama as an executive order in 2009. Former intelligence, military, and law enforcement officers have insisted the harsh tactics are not effective, as detainees become desperate to say anything to stop the torture.

Flynn, Sessions, and Pompeo will go to work for a president-elect who defined his campaign by xenophobic outbursts. Two of the appointees have said Islam itself — rather than a perversion of the religion’s teachings — is the source of extremist violence.



That has lawmakers and civil rights groups worried that the next administration could jeopardize the civil liberties of Muslim Americans, fuel a rising trend in hate crimes, and endanger American security. Flynn himself tweeted this year: “Fear of Muslims is RATIONAL.”

“The most devastating terrorist attacks on America in the last 20 years come overwhelmingly from people of a single faith and are performed in the name of that faith,” Pompeo said in his 2013 congressional remarks calling on Muslim spiritual leaders to repudiate Islamist terrorism.

While Sessions has described Trump’s call to ban Muslims from entering the country as treading on “dangerous ground,” the Alabama Republican also said many Muslim immigrants have committed acts of terrorism and that “a lot of them believe it’s commanded by their religion.”

Flynn has accused the Obama administration of timidity when faced with jihadis he claims are inside U.S. borders plotting to impose sharia, or Islamic law, though he has cited no specific evidence. “If we cannot criticize the radical Muslims in our own country, we cannot fight them either in America or overseas,” Flynn wrote in his book.

Trump’s strident Islamophobic rhetoric stands in stark contrast with that of the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when the Bush administration went out of its way to clarify that America had no conflict with Islam itself. The rhetoric embraced by Trump and his lieutenants risks alienating Muslim countries aligned with Washington.

Counterterrorism experts warn that Trump and his planned national security team are playing into the hands of Islamic State propaganda, which seeks to portray its cause as a struggle for Islam. Talk of banning Muslim immigrants, maintaining the Guantánamo military prison, and returning to torture all fuel Islamic State recruitment efforts, as Trump’s campaign itself did before the election.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a senior member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, called Flynn’s appointment “alarming” and said the retired general’s statements about Muslims are “profoundly un-American, as well as damaging to the fight against terrorism and national security.”

To better combat terrorism, Pompeo, a three-term congressman from Kansas and former Army captain tapped by Trump to lead the CIA, has called for a “fundamental upgrade to America’s surveillance capabilities” that would roll back the modest reforms of such programs championed by Obama.

Pompeo has spoken in vague terms about an electronic dragnet that would collect a vast amount of information on its targets. “Congress should pass a law re-establishing collection of all metadata, and combining it with publicly available financial and lifestyle information into a comprehensive, searchable database,” Pompeo wrote in the Wall Street Journal this year. “Legal and bureaucratic impediments to surveillance should be removed.”

In that effort, Pompeo may find an ally in Sessions. When the New York Times revealed in 2005 the National Security Agency’s warrantless surveillance program, Sessions defended the program. “It is not a warrantless wiretapping of the American people,” he said. “And I don’t think this action is nearly as troublesome as being made out here.”



Both Pompeo and Sessions support keeping open the most maligned symbol of Bush's war on terror — the detention center at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo. Sessions has even defended the prison because it provides its detainees with “tropical breezes” they'd miss in the United States. He has also said he supports trying terrorist suspects in military courts.

In an April interview with the Topeka Capital-Journal, Pompeo defended the island prison as an essential tool for the intelligence community. “They need a place where they can interrogate those terrorists,” he said. “That is not the federal district courthouse or federal penitentiary — lawyers, constitutional rights, Miranda rights — no go. They need to have a place. Guantanamo Bay is a perfect facility to accomplish the intelligence collection.”

All three men picked by Trump — even the general who worked for the current administration — are united by a deep hostility toward Obama and Clinton, portraying them as undermining America's interests and kowtowing to the country's adversaries.

Flynn's appointment by Trump marks a remarkable trajectory for a career military officer who spent two years working in Obama's administration as the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Flynn was forced out of the DIA after his ambitious reorganization rubbed many subordinates the wrong way and put him at loggerheads with other spy agencies. Flynn says he was fired for telling lawmakers that al Qaeda was gaining strength and for ignoring administration talking points in order to deliver what he considered a more accurate assessment of the threats facing the country.

The White House job will prove to be a very different assignment for someone who made his reputation as a deadly effective counterterrorism hand. His experiences at the Joint Special Operations Command in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his time at the DIA, underscore that résumé, and it is unclear how that will translate to managing a large staff at the White House and shaping the country's military and diplomatic strategy.

Michael Hayden, a former director of the CIA and NSA under George W. Bush and briefly under Obama, calls Flynn “hard-working.” But he notes that his expertise has been mostly at the “tactical level” on the battlefield, and successfully taking on the job of national security advisor “is going to demand that he up his game.” Although his two-year tenure at the DIA was marked by a turf war with rivals inside the administration, Flynn was in front of the rest of Washington officialdom in describing the threat posed by the Islamic State — once dismissed by Obama as al Qaeda's “[junior varsity] team” — by issuing warnings to the White House and lawmakers.

Sarah Chayes, a civilian special advisor to two commanders of U.S.-led troops in Afghanistan who worked with Flynn, told FP the former officer is “energetic and incredibly hard-working — there's always something happening around him.” But as a manager, he was “unbelievably chaotic. No follow-through at all.”

Flynn has come under fire over his overseas consulting work, including reports that he sat in on classified briefings with Trump while continuing to work for foreign clients. Pompeo rose to prominence after just a few years in Washington thanks to his outsized criticism of Clinton during the long and politicized investigation of the 2012 attack on the U.S. diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya. The Kansas Republican repeatedly subjected Clinton to aggressive questioning before a House panel investigating the attack.



But after two years of investigation, at the cost of \$7 million, the House panel found no evidence of wrongdoing at the State Department or by Clinton in handling the attack, which left four Americans dead. Nonetheless, Pompeo released an addendum to that report claiming a cover-up.

Critics of the Republican-led investigation argue it was a partisan witch hunt intended to tarnish Clinton. On the campaign trail, Trump repeatedly used the events in Benghazi and the Obama administration's shifting explanations for the attack as a way to batter Clinton. Pompeo's appointment could install one of her principal congressional tormentors in the country's most powerful intelligence post.

Though his hard-line views generally align with Trump's, Pompeo, with degrees from West Point and Harvard, is generally described as bright and a student of national security issues. "While we have had our share of strong differences — principally on the politicization of the tragedy in Benghazi — I know that he is someone who is willing to listen and engage," said Schiff, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee.

Hayden, who has harshly criticized Trump, said he was "heartened" by the pick. "This is a serious man who takes these questions seriously and who has studied these questions," he said at a breakfast event for reporters at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank.

Sessions came out early for Trump, when most of his colleagues were keeping their distance or dismissing the former reality television host, and the president-elect has rewarded him with a job the Republican senator and former attorney has long coveted. "He is a world-class legal mind," Trump said Friday, hours before he spent \$25 million to settle a suit against his private university facing allegations of fraud.



Announcements & Reports

Are advanced economies at risk of falling into debt traps?

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2016/11/are-advanced-economies-at-risk-of-falling-into-debt-traps/>

A glass half full: The rebalance, reassurance, and resolve in the U.S.-China strategic relationship

Source : RAND
Weblink : <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-glass-half-full-the-rebalance-reassurance-and-resolve-in-the-u-s-china-strategic-relationship/>

Income convergence during the crisis: did EU funds provide a buffer?

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2016/10/income-convergence-did-eu-funds-provide-a-buffer/>

Upcoming Events

Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union

Date : 29 November 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 : 29 November 2016
Place : London - UK
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>

13th Asia Europe Economic Forum (AEEF)

Date : 30 November 2016
Place : Beijing - China
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/13th-asia-europe-economic-forum/>

Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?

Date : 01 December 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 : 02 December 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 : 03 December 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 : 04 December 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 : 04 December 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 : 05 December 2016
Place : Lisbon - Portugal
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/vision-europe-summit-2016/>