

THE EURO BRIEF



MARCH 21, 2018

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EUROPE – US

[Trump launches war on WTO- Brussels panic as EU admits ‘we need a plan B’](#)

Trump’s controversial new tariffs could be the start of an all-out war on the World Trade Organization and handicap global economic growth in Europe, a prospect causing officials in Brussels to lose sleep and scramble for a response. [*Express*, March 19, 2018]

[Trump touts Irish ties, but jokes about country's taxes](#)

In a meeting at the White House at St. Patrick's Day, President Trump and Taoiseach Varadkar spoke about Irish people living in the US illegally, the negotiations over the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland and trade. [*The Washington Post*, March 15, 2018]

EUROPE – RUSSIA

[Europe sharply divided over Vladimir Putin's re-election](#)

Some see it as necessary to try to repair a difficult relationship; others argue Russia under Putin has irreversibly turned away from western liberal values and international norms; and a third group, the new rightwing populists, has been straight-out rejoicing. [*The Guardian*, March 19, 2018]

[Russia expels 23 British diplomats, escalating row over ex-spy's poisoning](#)

Russia also ordered the closing of the British Council in Moscow and revoked permission for the British consulate general in St. Petersburg; days after the UK expelled Russian diplomats. [*The New York Times*, March 17, 2018]

EUROPE – EAST ASIA

[Germany and China to work on steel overcapacity via G20](#)

Merkel and Xi emphasized the importance of close and multilateral cooperation in international trade, agreed to deepen their countries' strategic partnership and discuss solutions to global steel overcapacity and the US threat of tariffs. [*Deutsche Welle*, March 18, 2018]

[North Korea-Sweden talks focus on 'peaceful solution' to nuclear conflict](#)

The two sides concluded three days of talks in Stockholm over the security situation on the Korean Peninsula and discussed opportunities and challenges for continued diplomatic efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the nuclear conflict. [*The New York Times*, March 17, 2018]

EUROPE – MIDDLE EAST

[European powers propose new Iran sanctions](#)

Britain, France and Germany have proposed fresh EU sanctions on Iran over its ballistic missiles and its role in Syria's war, in a bid to persuade Washington to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran. [*Haaretz*, March 17, 2018]

[EU funding for Turkey fails to cut corruption or bolster judiciary](#)

Billions of euros of EU spending on Turkey has largely failed to cut corruption, strengthen the judiciary and create greater political freedom, according to a report by the European Court of Auditors that lays bare tension between Brussels and Ankara. [*Financial Times*, March 14, 2018]

EUROPE – ISRAEL

[Czech minister puts hold on Israeli radar deal over NATO concerns](#)

The Czech Ministry of Defense will not sign a \$175 million much-awaited contract to purchase eight ELM-2084 multisession radars worth from Israel unless the radars are interoperable with NATO's air defense system. [*Defense News*, March 16, 2018]

[Netanyahu lauds Austrian Chancellor's speech on anti-Semitism; Austria hopes Israel will end boycott soon](#)

Israel is still officially boycotting Kurz's cabinet ministers from the far-right Freedom Party, which has anti-Semitic roots, despite recent messages from senior Austrian officials to Israel that they're interested in ending the boycott soon. [*Haaretz*, March 15, 2018]

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

EU POLITICS

[Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel still in limbo to strengthen Europe](#)

In a meeting at the Élysée Palace, French President and German Chancellor discussed at length the best way to strengthen the EU and the euro zone. They confirmed their intention to formulate a roadmap, submitted to their partner, by June. [*Le Monde*, March 17, 2018]

[U.K. and EU agree to Brexit transition as Irish puzzle persists](#)

The UK clinched a deal that will buy it time in Brexit talks in a move the EU's chief negotiator hailed as a decisive step. But it's all still contingent on finding a solution to the most intractable issue of all- the Irish border. [*Bloomberg*, March 19, 2018]

[EU heading for disaster as Italy's populists set to join forces to destabilize Brussels](#)

The EU fears a coalition majority between Lega and the Five Star Movement, based on defiance of EU fiscal rules and economic nationalism, could cause clashes with Brussels and damage confidence in the country's ability to pay off its significant debt. [*Express*, March 17, 2018]

[Angela Merkel visits Poland in bid to thaw chilly relations](#)

German Chancellor is carrying a message of EU unity on her trip to Warsaw. But with tensions simmering over rule of law, immigration, refugee policy, Poland's new Holocaust law and a new gas pipeline, Merkel had to walk a fine line. [*Deutsche Welle*, March 19, 2018]

[Horst Seehofer berates EU on refugees](#)

Germany's Interior Minister criticized the EU for a patronizing tone towards Eastern European states that have refused to take in asylum seekers under an EU-wide quota system. [*The Times*, March 19, 2018]

[Hungary's Orbán: Western Europe is under migrant invasion](#)

Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, said Western Europe is under a migrant invasion that will soon make a minority of native-born Europeans, as it surrendered with "its hands up" to a mass migration of people from Africa and the Middle East. [*The Washington Post*, March 15, 2018]

[Gibraltar warns it could rescind Europeans' rights if Spain uses the veto of Brexit](#)

Gibraltar has warned that it could rescind the rights and protections enjoyed by Spanish and other EU citizens living and working in its territory if Madrid uses its veto to exclude the Rock from any Brexit agreement between the EU and the UK. [*El País*, March 16, 2018]

DOMESTIC POLITICS

[Germany's dangerous political marriage](#)

Germany's new grand coalition is a good outcome for Germany's short-term stability, especially with regard to Europe. But it is a bad outcome for democracy, especially at a time when populist forces are a growing threat. [*Project Syndicate*, March 13, 2018]

[Italian President is ready to allow months for coalition talks](#)

Sergio Mattarella is ready to allow time for passions to cool and will give political leaders until July to break their deadlock. If no working majority can be pieced together, he could trigger another election for the fall. [*Bloomberg*, March 19, 2018]

[Angry anti-corruption protesters demand early elections after Slovakia's prime minister resigns](#)

Robert Fico, Slovakia's long-serving Prime Minister, was forced to step down by a furore over the murder of an investigative journalist, and the mandate to form a new government would go to deputy prime minister Peter Pellegrini. [*Telegraph*, March 15, 2018]

[Norway Justice Minister quits to avert government collapse](#)

Norway's Justice Minister, who accused the opposition Labour party of putting terrorists' rights before national security, has resigned to avert to lose confidence vote and a collapse of the country's minority government. [*The Guardian*, March 20, 2018]

[Belgian right-wing party fends off racism accusations](#)

Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon defended his right-wing New Flemish Alliance from accusations of racism, after party leader and Antwerp Mayor Bart De Wever sparked outrage with comments about the Muslims in Belgium. [*Politico*, March 19, 2018]

JEWISH COMMUNITIES

[Macedonia becomes fourth country to include demonization of Israel in anti-Semitism definition](#)

The Balkan nation of Macedonia joined the United Kingdom, Romania, Bulgaria and the European Parliament in adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism that includes the demonization of Israel. [*Haaretz*, March 15, 2018]

[In Latvia, hundreds march in honor of SS veterans](#)

The march in Latvia, a member of the NATO alliance and the EU, is currently the only public event in Europe and beyond honoring people who fought under the banner of SS, Nazi Germany's elite security force. [*The Times of Israel*, March 16, 2018]