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Foreign Affairs

EUROPE – US
[Trump pulled out of a massive trade deal. Now 11 countries are going ahead without the US](#)
The New Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership went into effect on December 30th 2018, a major 11-country agreement which will reshape trade rules among economic powerhouses like Japan, Canada, Australia and Mexico. The United States pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership in January 2017, and will now be subjected to tariffs from countries within the partnership. *[CNN, December 30, 2018]*

[Macron criticized Trump for his abrupt Syria withdrawal, saying 'an ally should be dependable'](#)
French President Emmanuel Macron critized President Donald Trump's withdrawal of US troops from Syria and suggested that he was not reliable since "an ally should be dependable." In a news conference during President Macron's visit in Chad, the French leader told the world that "I very deeply regret the decision made [by Trump] on Syria.". *[Business Insider, December 24, 2018]*

EUROPE – RUSSIA
[Putin tests new missile to frighten Europe](#)
Russia has tested a "hypersonic" missile capable of a nuclear strike anywhere in Europe. After the test was completed, Russian President Vladimir Putin called the successful results "a great New Year's present for the country". The weapons test comes amid a rift between NATO and Russia over Russia's violation of a Cold War-era nuclear arms control pact, known as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). *[EU Observer, December 27, 2018]*

[Turkey, Russia to boost Eurasia security: Putin](#)
Turkey and Russia will continue to work together for strengthening peace, security and stability on the Eurasian continent, Russian President Vladimir Putin said. In a New Year greeting to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, Putin wrote that he was pleased with the development of Russia-Turkey relations in 2018, specifically highlighting the construction of Turkey's first nuclear plant and the Turkish Stream gas pipeline. Putin also stressed that their joined efforts in Syria are making a decisive contribution to fighting terrorism and advancing the process of a political solution in that country. *[Hurriyet Daily News, December 30, 2018]*

EUROPE – EAST ASIA
[China, EU on path of expanding cooperation in outer space](#)
China's Chang'e-4 lunar probe was launched in December, and is expected to make the first-ever soft landing on the far side of the moon. During the mission, China has cooperated with four other countries, three of which are from Europe, which highlights the increasing space cooperation between China and the European Union (EU) in recent years. *[Xinhua, December 30, 2018]*

[With eye on China, Germany tightens foreign investment rules](#)
Germany agreed to new rules to lower the threshold for screening and even blocking purchases of stakes in German firms by non-Europeans, in a move to fend off unwanted takeovers by Chinese investors in strategic areas. The decision by Angela Merkel's cabinet is a response to growing concern that China's state-backed companies are gaining too much access to key technologies in Europe while Beijing shields its own companies. *[Reuters, December 19, 2018]*

EUROPE – MIDDLE EAST
[Joint press statement following the 8th Association Council between the EU and Egypt](#)
On December 20th 2018, the 8th session between the Association Council (AC) of the European Union and Egypt took place. Both sides recognized the importance in their ongoing partnership with regard to their political, economic, social, security and cultural interests. In addition, both entities discussed their common challenges in the region. *[European Council Press Release, December 20, 2018]*

[EU says it's premature for Syria to rejoin Arab League](#)
The EU warned Egypt that it shouldn't help Syria get readmitted to the Arab League, however, top security chiefs from both countries met for rare talks in Cairo. The warning by the European institution came in the EU's position statement for the EU-Egypt Association Council in Brussels *[Al-Monitor, December 28, 2018]*

EUROPE – ISRAEL
[Europe's largest bank to divest from Israeli defense contractor following BDS campaign](#)
Europe's largest bank confirmed that it has liquidated its holdings from the Israeli firm, Elbit systems, due to public pressure from the Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions movement in the United Kingdom. The divestment from Elbit was due to its role in selling "weapons to the Israeli military which is used in attacks against Palestinians". *[Haaretz, December 29, 2018]*

[EU, France condemn Israel settlement expansion in West Bank](#)
The European Union and the French Foreign Ministry condemned Israel's recent approval for the construction of 2,191 homes in a move to expand Jewish settlement in the West Bank. The EU released said in a statement: "The European Union's position on Israeli settlement construction and related activities is clear and remains unchanged: all settlement activity is illegal under international law and it undermines the viability of the two-state solution and the prospects for a lasting peace.". *[i24 News, December 27, 2018]*

Internal Affairs

EU POLITICS
[Macron v Salvini: the battle over Europe's political future](#)
With the European Parliament elections approaching in May 2019, Europe's political future is coming into question. On one side, there is Matteo Salvini, Italy's deputy prime minister, who represents hardcore Euro-scepticism and is now a standard-bearer for Europe's nationalist rightwing. On the other, there is Emmanuel Macron, the most Europhile French president in a generation, with an ambitious agenda to strengthen the EU. *[Financial Times, December 28, 2018]*

[Bloomberg gives Greece a 'B' for performance in eurozone](#)
Despite Greece's economy suffering severely during the extended crisis, Bloomberg has given Greece an overall 'B' grade in its report for the euro's 20th anniversary. The report said: "While Greece suffered mightily during the sovereign debt crisis, it also eked out a B. For all that went wrong, being part of the euro for 18 years made it possible for Greece to build new trade relationships with Europe's wealthier core" *[The National Herald, December 29, 2018]*

[Food prices to finance: what a no-deal Brexit could mean for Britain](#)
If Prime Minister Theresa May fails in January to have her deal approved by parliament, the prospect of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union without a deal becomes more likely. In this article, journalists examine what a no-deal Brexit could mean to various sectors including farming, health, commerce, and transportation. *[The Guardian, December 30, 2018]*

[EU is not trying to keep Britain in - Juncker](#)
The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, told a German newspaper that the European Union is not trying to keep Britain in, and wants to start discussing future ties directly after the U.K. parliament approves of a Brexit deal. In the interview Juncker said: "It is being insinuated that our aim is to keep the United Kingdom in the EU by all possible means. That is not our intention. All we want is clarity about our future relations. And we respect the result of the referendum." *[Reuters, December 30, 2018]*

[Romania to take over EU presidency amid fears for rule of law](#)
Romania's government has been accused of seeking to regress on years of democratic reforms as it prepares to become the head of the European Union's rotating presidency for the first time on 1 January. The European commission warned Romania in November that it was backtracking the progress it has made since joining the EU in 2007, and the European parliament passed a resolution expressing "deep concerns" at legislation that has the potential to weaken the rule of law. *[The Guardian, December 30, 2018]*

[Croatia and the Eurozone: Majority of Croats Against Euro Introduction](#)
Croatia and the Eurozone is a particularly sensitive topic among many Croatians. After having seen what happened to Greece several years ago, many are suspicious of the introduction of the common currency which was once presented as a good idea that had gone very wrong. According to a survey, 56 percent of respondents from the Republic of Croatia are against the introduction of the single European currency. *[Total Croatia News, December 22, 2018]*

DOMESTIC POLITICS
[Martial laws comes to an end in Ukraine after 30 days](#)
Martial law, which was declared in parts of Ukraine, ends after 30 days. Last month, naval forces from the two countries clashed by Crimea, a disputed territory which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Martial laws were declared after the capture of three Ukrainian naval vessels and 24 sailors by Russian forces. *[BBC, December 26, 2018]*

[Angela Merkel: Germany to take on greater global responsibility](#)
In her annual address, the German chancellor said old certainties about international cooperation had "come under pressure", alluding to strained US-German relations. "In our own interest, we must take on more responsibility," the German leader said, warning that global problems like climate change, migration and terrorism cannot be solved alone. *[BBC, December 31, 2018]*

[UK, France to take action over rise in Channel migrant crossings](#)
Attempts to cross the English Channel have been increasing since October 2018, with authorities from both France and the UK struggling to stop them. In the coming weeks, the two countries will increase surveillance patrols, introduce measures to dismantle trafficking gangs improve, and raise an awareness about the dangers of sea crossings in one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. *[France24, December 31, 2018]*

[Corbyn: Brexit would go ahead even if Labour won snap election](#)
Jeremy Corbyn has restated Labour's policy of leading Britain out of the European Union with a remodeled Brexit deal, shrugging off intense pressure from Labour MPs for the party to throw its weight behind a second referendum. The Labour leader insisted that even if his party won a snap general election in January, Corbyn would commit to going to Brussels and try to secure a better deal before Brexit happens on March 29. *[The Guardian, December 21, 2018]*

[Polish court tells German broadcaster to apologise over WWII series](#)
A court in Poland ruled that German public television network ZDF must apologise over a controversial drama series that depicts Polish underground fighters in World War II as being anti-Semitic. The court also ordered that the apology must appear on both ZDF and Polish public television TVP. Furthermore, the district court also said that each airing of the series should open with a statement that discloses that the characters depicted in the TV series are fictitious and that Poles helped Jews during World War II, while Germany occupied Poland at the time. *[Radio Poland, December 21, 2018]*

[Spain modernizing Venezuelan tanks despite EU-wide arms embargo](#)
Spain is actively helping in the modernization of the Venezuelan army's tanks despite a European Union imposed embargo on arms sales to Venezuela. The cross-ministry board that controls Spanish military exports approved a sale of €20 million of tank parts to the government of President Nicolás Maduro in the first quarter of 2018. *[El Pais, December 31, 2018]*

[Danish News in Brief: Hate crimes up big time in Copenhagen](#)
A report from the Danish state police, the Rigspolitiet, shows that the number of hate crimes against sexual and religious minorities in Copenhagen has risen sharply recently. The report were 101 reports of hate crimes in the Danish capital in 2017, up from 60 in the previous year. And it's not just a trend occurring just in Denmark. *[CPH Post, December 27, 2018]*

JEWISH COMMUNITIES
[Georges Loinger: French hero who saved Jews in WW2 dies](#)
Born in Strasbourg to a Jewish family, Georges Loinger was captured by the Nazis in 1940 but escaped. During the war he joined an aid agency which helped Jewish children whose parents had been killed or sent to concentration camps. One of the methods he used to save children was to take them to the Swiss border, kick a football over the frontier and get them to chase it into Switzerland. Loinger is thought to have saved more than 350 children. *[BBC, December 30, 2018]*

[Holocaust memorial for Greek Jews sent to Auschwitz vandalized](#)
A memorial to the Jews of a Greek town who were sent to Auschwitz by the Nazis was vandalized. The Memorial to the Jewish Martyrs of Kastoria, in the region of West Macedonia, was covered with black spray-paint. Local volunteers helped to clean the memorial. *[Haaretz, December 27, 2018]*