



January 21, 2019

Foreign Affairs

EUROPE – US

[Trump threatens to 'devastate' Turkey's economy if they attack Kurds in Syria](#)

President Donald Trump tweeted that the US would "devastate Turkey economically" if the NATO-allied country attacks Kurds in the region. It's a clear-cut threat toward an ally in the Syrian conflict, who has partnered with the US in the fight against ISIS. Turkey views some Kurdish groups in the region as terrorist organizations, and the Kurds make up the majority of US-allied fighters working in the Syrian civil war against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Trump followed up in a second tweet that: "Likewise, do not want the Kurds to provoke Turkey." [CNV, January 14, 2019]

[EU open to discussing cars, not farming in U.S. trade talks](#)

The European Union is willing to discuss car tariffs but will not remove duties on farm products in trade talks with the United States, laying down a possible collision with Washington. The EU's proposal on tariffs falls short of the U.S.' wide-ranging wish-list, including comprehensive agricultural market access. [Reuters, January 18, 2019]

EUROPE – RUSSIA

[EU foreign ministers to discuss sanctions against Russia over attack on Ukrainian boats](#)

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said his EU counterparts will meet in February and March to discuss new sanctions against Russia over an attack on Ukrainian navy boats near the Kerch Strait. The Foreign Minister stated that "There are two approaches here: one approach concerns personal sanctions against those who organized all this and who gave commands, but the EU is right that all the military command of Russia is already under sanctions – who else could be added here? Or [the second approach] is that we will also work on the logic of restricting access [to EU ports] for Russian ships assigned to the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea." [UNIAN, January 19, 2019]

[Germany: Russia can save INF if it stops violating the treaty](#)

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that Russia could save the missile accord known as the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) if it halts itself of violating the treaty. During the ministers visit to Moscow, Maas said the disarmament treaty needed to stay intact since it is crucial to Germany's security interests. [Reuters, January 18, 2019]

EUROPE – EAST ASIA

[Poland arrests Huawei worker on allegations of spying for China](#)

Poland has arrested a Chinese employee of Huawei and a Polish individual involved in cyber-business on allegations of spying, deepening the controversy over western criticism of the Chinese telecommunication company. No evidence has been shown publicly and Huawei constantly denies allegations of spying for Beijing. Western criticism has led to several countries and businesses to reconsider whether they should allow Huawei's equipment to be used in their telecommunication networks. This continues to strain relations with the regime in Beijing. [The Guardian, January 16, 2019]

[Greece faces €200M fine for failing to stop Chinese fraud network](#)

EU anti-fraud investigators are demanding that Greek customs pay more than €200 million for failing to prevent a major Chinese fraud network from dumping ultra-cheap clothing and footwear in Europe. The investigation, conducted by the EU's anti-fraud office, OLAF, focused on the Chinese-owned Pireus port in Athens, which is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Customs officials there failed to block a sophisticated network of cross-border criminals, who were fraudulently avoiding import duties and value-added taxes. [Politico, January 14, 2019]

[France, Japan look to increase Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation](#)

Official talks between Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya, and French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and Defense Minister Florence Parly took place regarding Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation. At the conclusion, the two sides released a joint statement underlining their collective areas of concern in the region. Notably, Japan and France have set up plans to hold a comprehensive maritime dialogue later this year, which could lead to greater Franco-Japanese military cooperation in the Pacific. Officials from both countries voiced an interest in maintaining freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region, and expressed their concerns indirectly about China's growing maritime assertiveness in the East and South China Sea. [The Diplomat, January 15, 2019]

EUROPE – MIDDLE EAST

[Iran denies German army translator spied for Tehran](#)

Iran's government has denied any links to a German-Afghan national arrested in Germany, who was accused of carrying out espionage on behalf of Tehran. The state IRNA news agency cited a spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry, stating that Iran has never had contact with the military consultant and translator. The spokesman added that the arrest of Abdul Hamid S., was an attempt by "enemies" of Iran to sabotage the Islamic Republic's relations with the European Union. [Deutsche-Welle, January 20, 2019]

[Egypt abuses put French military deals in spotlight as Macron heads to Cairo](#)

As President Emmanuel Macron heads to Egypt on January 27th, human rights activists are calling on the French president to address labour rights abuses at an Egyptian shipyard building battleships in partnership with a French company. According to the 45-page report titled: "Striking Back: Egypt's Attack on Labour Rights Defenders", labour rights violations have proceeded under the noses of managerial staff of the French company, Naval Group. Few expect Macron to publicly address labour rights abuses with his Egyptian counterpart, while others view it as "the responsibility of France to defend defenders of human rights" [France24, January 18, 2019]

EUROPE – ISRAEL

[Netanyahu asks visiting Romanian PM to move embassy to Jerusalem](#)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked Romania to move its embassy to Jerusalem when he met with Prime Minister Viorica Dancila in his office. It's a step the Romanian government has spoken about, but has taken no action. "I hope you will act to stop the bad resolutions against Israel in the European Union. And also, of course, to move your embassy and other embassies to Jerusalem." [The Jerusalem Post, January 18, 2019]

[Rivlin to visit France](#)

President Rivlin's four day visit to Paris is within the framework of a bi-national series of activities and events in celebration of Israel's 70th anniversary of independence. In addition to discussing bilateral affairs and the resurgence of antisemitism in Europe with French President Emanuel Macron, Rivlin will also tour a French Air Force base, where he will be escorted by Israel Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Amikam Norkis. [The Jerusalem Post, January 19, 2019]

Internal Affairs

EU POLITICS

[EU expresses horror at Brexit vote, refuses to reopen deal](#)

The European Union said it was horrified by the massive scale of the U.K. Parliament defeat of the Brexit deal agreed to with Prime Minister Theresa May but said there was no option to renegotiate. Diplomats expressed that they were stunned by the extent of the loss. As the EU tried to plot its response, they said they think there's little more they can do to help May and fear that the U.K. tumbling out without agreement in March has now become a real prospect. [Bloomberg, January 15, 2019]

[Brexit vote: Donald Tusk hints UK should stay in EU](#)

European Council President Donald Tusk has hinted that the UK should stay in the EU, after Prime Minister May's Brexit deal was rejected in parliament. "If a deal is impossible, and no-one wants no deal, then who will finally have the courage to say what the only positive solution is?" he tweeted. Other EU diplomats also expressed their regret over the vote. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker warned that time was running out for the UK to strike a deal. "I urge the United Kingdom to clarify its intentions as soon as possible. Time is almost up," he said shortly after the result was announced. [BBC, January 16, 2019]

[Germany and France signal willingness to delay Brexit](#)

Germany and France have signaled their willingness to delay Brexit as Michel Barnier offered to renegotiate with Theresa May in the event that she is able to build a majority with Labour in favor of a closer relationship with the EU. EU ambassadors also discussed the issue for the first time at a meeting in Brussels, as the member states attempted to decide their terms for extending the negotiating time beyond March 29th. [The Guardian, January 16, 2019]

[Amid Brexit chaos, E.U. sees a 'Catastrophic Success'](#)

The European Union took a tough stance in negotiating its divorce with Britain, wishing to preserve its unity and discourage other countries from wanting to leave the bloc. But now officials worry that what they have achieved may be "a catastrophic success." The possibility of Britain leaving without any agreement — a so-called "hard exit" — is extremely possible, and analysts warn that it could trigger a recession in Britain. This could snowball into causing huge backlogs, delays and shortages of goods, and badly hit the European economy, too, since more than 40 percent of Britain's trade is with the bloc. Yet the EU see no point in making any concessions now, since Mrs. May has lost control of the process. [The New York Times, January 17, 2019]

[Merkel eyes closer cooperation in EU defense systems](#)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that the European Union must deepen cooperation in defense and in particular weapons systems development, warning Germans that they may need to make compromises on strict export controls. In an attempt to counter growing eurosceptic nationalism before elections to the European Parliament in May, Merkel has stressed the importance of close cooperation within the bloc. [Channel NewsAsia, January 19, 2019]

[Viktor Orbán calls for anti-migration politicians to take over EU](#)

Hungary's far-right Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, has called for "anti-migration politicians" to take over Europe's institutions after this spring's elections, as he hailed a new partnership between Poland's rightwing government and Italy's populist Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini. "This is a topic that is radically transforming European politics, it's the defining political process in Europe," Orbán said. The Hungariann Prime Minister also stated that his country's goal is to gain an anti-immigration majority in the European parliament, then in the executive of the European commission, and later, the European council, where national leaders make the most important EU decisions. [The Guardian, January 10, 2019]

DOMESTIC POLITICS

[May's Brexit deal failed. What happens now?](#)

The British Parliament voted to reject Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal just 10 weeks before Britain was scheduled to leave the European Union. There are various scenarios that could happen now that her deal will not move forward. [The New York Times, January 15, 2019]

[May's government survives no-confidence vote](#)

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn argued that Prime Minister May's administration had lost the right to govern and called for a vote of no-confidence. The PM won the vote by a margin of 19, including 10 votes from the DUP. Had the party voted against her, she would have lost by one. Giving her reaction to the result, PM May told MPs she would "continue to work to deliver on the solemn promise to the people of this country to deliver on the result of the referendum and leave the European Union". [BBC, January 16, 2019]

[Jeremy Corbyn expected to back move to block no-deal Brexit](#)

Jeremy Corbyn is poised to back a plan to block a no-deal Brexit as pressure builds within Labour and the trade unions for a delay to Britain's EU departure. It is believed that the Labour leader and his shadow cabinet team are preparing to support a proposal that would force Theresa May to request an extension to Britain's EU membership should no Brexit deal be agreed by early March. The plan would need the endorsement of the Labour to have a chance of being passed when the next round of critical votes takes place next week. [The Guardian, January 20, 2019]

[Macedonia gets a new name and a new start](#)

Alexis Tsipras and Zoran Zaev, the Prime Ministers of Greece and Macedonia, agreed to end a 27-year dispute over what to call the former Yugoslav republic. Macedonia's parliament endorsed a constitutional change making "North Macedonia" the country's official name, to go into effect once Greece has agreed too. The extra adjective is intended to alleviate long-standing fears in Athens of a territorial claim on the Greek region of Macedonia south of the border. PM Zaev hopes that talks will start this year to let Macedonia join the NATO alliance and, eventually, the European Union, since Greece is lifting a decade-long veto on both as part of the agreement. [The Economist, January 17, 2019]

[Greek PM Tsipras wins vote of confidence](#)

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras won a parliamentary vote of confidence called following a dispute over changing the name of Macedonia. The Prime Minister had called for the vote after his government's junior coalition partner, the right-wing Independent Greeks (ANEL), quit in disagreement over a deal to end a name dispute with Macedonia. [Politico, January 16, 2019]

[Marine Le Pen unveils far-right candidates for European election](#)

Marine Le Pen revealed her team of candidates who are gearing up to fill spots in the upcoming European Parliament election. At the top of her list, Le Pen has assigned 23 year old Jordan Bardella, a young party spokesman and regional councilor, to lead the National Rally's agenda in the European parliament. Le Pen is also counting on Thierry Mariani, a mainstream conservative Les Républicains defector and Kremlin sympathizer. She hopes to gain ground by appealing to her existing youth voters while winning new support from conservatives. Le Pen also believes she will benefit from the Gilets Jaunes protests, and that the country's anger that has fueled ten rounds of protests should translate into a high score for her party in the European election. [Politico, January 13, 2019]

JEWISH COMMUNITIES

[Hungarian Jews split over search for Holocaust victims' remains in Danube](#)

Hungary's largest Jewish organization asked Israeli and Hungarian authorities to suspend a search for the remains of Holocaust victims in the Danube river, stating that the dead should be left in peace. The search began at the request of Orthodox and Hasidic Jews, who arranged for an Israeli team to begin mapping out the floor of the river in Budapest in search of the remains of Holocaust victims murdered by Hungarian fascists. More than 500,000 Hungarian Jews were killed in the Holocaust, many of whom shot by the riverbank by the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross party. [Haaretz, January 19, 2019]

[Portugal's only rural Jewish community seeks a seat at the table](#)


The Jewish community of Belmonte is for the first time seeking from the Portuguese government equal status and access to funding as those enjoyed by Portugal's two larger Jewish communities of Lisbon and Porto. The approximately 70-member community are the only residents on the Iberian Peninsula that has retained rituals that date back to the Spanish Inquisition. Their presence in Belmonte continues to thrive, where they host a small kosher-market once a year, and participate in weekly Shabbat services. [The Times of Israel, January 19, 2019]


[In unusual step, French court imprisons writer for a year over anti-Semitic comments](#)

Alain Soral, considered a leading ideologue of France's far right and has made headlines for his extreme statements before, has been sentenced to one-year in prison for publishing anti-Semitic comments. In an article posted last March, he wrote that Jews are "manipulative, domineering and hateful," and that "the battle between the Jewish people and the rest of humanity should bear the character of a total genocide." [Haaretz, January 18, 2019]

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