



May 12, 2019

## Foreign Affairs

### EUROPE – US

#### After Trump hikes China tariffs, Europe girds for battle over cars

After raising tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese imports, U.S. President Donald Trump could turn the heat up on Europe as soon as next week when he is due to make a decision about its cars. For now, the EU, the world's biggest trade bloc, is a bystander in the battle between the other two global trade super powers. That is worrying enough for an economy that is slowing. European leaders and officials had long said they would not discuss trade arrangements under threat of action from Trump. *[Reuters, May 10, 2019]*

#### Pompeo is dead to Berlin

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo canceled a trip to Berlin at the last minute, thus jilting Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. "This is difficult to excuse," the Süddeutsche Zeitung, a daily bulletin in Germany, noted. What could be more "pressing" than what would have been Pompeo's first official visit to Berlin as secretary of state, the paper wondered. That the answer to that question, at least in Pompeo's view, was Iran, only enraged the Germans more. Berlin continues to cling to the illusion that Europe can save the nuclear deal with Iran that the U.S. abandoned a year ago and regards U.S. policy toward Tehran as belligerent. *[POLITICO, May 10, 2019]*

### EUROPE – RUSSIA

#### Russia is targeting Europe's elections. So are far-right copycats.

Less than two weeks before pivotal elections for the European Parliament, a constellation of websites and social media accounts linked to Russia or far-right groups is spreading disinformation, encouraging discord and amplifying distrust in the centrist parties that have governed for decades. European Union investigators, academics and advocacy groups say the new disinformation efforts share many of the same digital fingerprints or tactics used in previous Russian attacks, including the Kremlin's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. *[The New York Times, May 12, 2019]*

#### Alleged Russian spies sentenced to jail over Montenegro 'coup plot'

A court in Montenegro has sentenced alleged Russian military intelligence agents, opposition politicians and a number of associates to jail terms over an alleged 2016 attempt to organise a coup in the country and prevent it from joining Nato. The chief judge, Suzana Mugoša, said Eduard Shishmakov and Vladimir Popov, alleged GRU agents, were guilty of attempted terrorism and creating a criminal organisation, and handed them sentences of 15 and 12 years respectively. *[The Guardian, May 9, 2019]*

### EUROPE – EAST ASIA

#### The Chinese government is attempting to lobby British MPs to prevent human rights activists in the UK from criticizing its Hong Kong policy, a senior activist has claimed.

Benedict Rogers, the deputy chairman of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, said he was warned by two MPs about Beijing's alleged attempts after he wrote an article for the website Conservativehome.com. There is no suggestion either MP lobbied Mr Rogers on behalf of the Chinese government, but were instead warning him of what was underway. *[The Telegraph, May 10, 2019]*

#### India and France hold biggest naval exercises with one eye on China

France and India on Friday stepped up their biggest naval exercises as the Indian Ocean's strategic shipping lanes draw ever more envious eyes. Without naming the Asian giant, India and France worry about China's growing economic clout and its territorial claims that have caused tensions in the South China Sea. "We think we can bring more stability to a region that is strategic, that has huge stakes, notably for international trade," said Rear Admiral Olivier Lebas, who command the French fleet said. *[The Economic Times, May 10, 2019]*

### EUROPE – MIDDLE EAST

#### EU rejects 'ultimatums' from Iran over nuclear deal: EU statement

The EU has rejected any "ultimatums" from Iran, according to a joint statement released by the EU, France, Germany, and the UK. "We note with great concern the statement made by Iran concerning its commitments under the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)," the statement said. "We strongly urge Iran to continue to implement its commitments under the JCPOA in full as it has done until now and to refrain from any escalatory steps." Earlier, Iran said that it planned to cease "some commitments" on the nuclear deal, that was signed in 2015 with the US, France, China, Russia, and Germany. Tehran had agreed to restrict its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of debilitating economic sanctions. *[Euronews, May 9, 2019]*

#### Amid outcry over Yemen war, Saudi ship leaves France without arms cargo

A Saudi vessel that had been due to load weapons at a northern French port set sail without them and headed for Spain, a day after a rights group tried to block the cargo on humanitarian grounds. French rights group ACAT argued in a legal challenge on Thursday that the consignment contravened a U.N. treaty because the arms might be used against civilians in Yemen. A French judge threw out that legal challenge but the Bahri-Yanbu set course for Santander shortly after minus the weapons, officials said and ship-tracking data showed. The saga is an embarrassment for President Emmanuel Macron, who defended arms sales to Saudi Arabia. *[Reuters, May 10, 2019]*

### EUROPE – ISRAEL

#### Israel 'very clear' on voiding Germany's Far-right AfD Party, Ambassador says

Israel's ambassador to Germany, Jeremy Issacharoff, says he avoids the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party because of its "highly offensive" stance on the Holocaust. "A number of times their leaders have said things which I regard as being highly offensive to Jews, to Israel and to the whole issue of the Holocaust," he said. The ambassador also said while many Germans had developed a culture of remembrance towards the Holocaust, that attribute did not apply to the AfD. *[Haaretz, May 12, 2019]*

#### Hungary hits out after EU 'ignores its veto' on statement criticising Israel

The European Union has been accused of ignoring a last-minute veto from Hungary on a recent statement criticizing Israel's conduct toward Palestinians at a UN security council meeting. In the statement, Finland's representative to the UN, Kai Sauer, excluded Hungary as he read out the 27 EU countries that he would be speaking on behalf of. Citing "serious concerns" over the status of rocky Israel-Palestine relations, Sauer said work towards a peaceful two-state solution was the "key priority" for the 27 EU states. In response, Hungary said it was "unacceptable" to read the statement on behalf of the EU without unanimous membership agreement. *[Euronews, May 5, 2019]*

## Internal Affairs

### EU POLITICS

#### Farage's Brexit Party heading for big win in EU Parliament elections, poll finds

Nigel Farage and his newly formed Brexit Party are headed for an election victory in the May 23 election for the European Parliament, with more than a third of British voters backing the Euroskeptc party, a new poll has shown. The survey published in The Guardian showed the Brexit Party winning 34 percent of the vote — more than the Labour Party and the governing Conservative party put together. *[The Times of Israel, May 11, 2019]*

#### How far can Le Pen's, Salvini's wish for a far-right grand alliance in EU parliament go?

Le Pen, the leader of France's far-right National Rally (formerly the National Front), and Salvini, Italy's deputy prime minister and leader of its nationalist League party, have both been courting fellow hard-right populists across the continent. In doing so, they are seeking to weaponize the expected gains for nationalist parties in the May 26 European elections. "Anti-European" parties will win 35 percent of the vote, according to data analyzed by the European Council on Foreign Relations. At present, the European far-right is split across three umbrella groups. In addition to its linchpins the National Rally and the League, the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) bloc has expanded to encompass the nationalist Alternative for Germany (AfD), as well as an array of smaller Scandinavian and Eastern European far-right parties. *[France24, May 10, 2019]*

#### EU leaders discuss future of Europe at Romania summit

Leaders of 27 EU member states are meeting in the Romanian city of Sibiu to discuss the bloc's future course after Britain's departure. The summit comes some two weeks before European parliamentary elections that have been overshadowed by concerns over Britain's fraught efforts to leave the bloc and the resurgence of nationalist forces across the continent. The 27 member states have also announced a special summit at the end of May to discuss the elections and the outcome, and start the process of choosing a new head of the Commission. *[Deutsche-Welle, May 8, 2019]*

#### Proposal to spend 25% of EU budget on climate change

Eight European countries have called for an ambitious strategy to tackle climate change — and to spend a quarter of the entire EU budget on fighting it. The joint statement says the EU should have net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 "at the latest". It was signed by France, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. The group says their plan can "go hand in hand with prosperity" and "set an example for other countries to follow." *[BBC, May 8, 2019]*

#### Exit from mainstream looms after Orban rejects EU conservative

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said he could no longer support Manfred Weber for the EU position after he "insulted" Hungarians. The leader of Germany's conservatives said she Orban's Fidesz party would quit Europe's main center-right group after he withdrew support for the bloc's candidate to head the European Commission. *[Reuters, May 6, 2019]*

#### Netherlands far behind other EU countries on renewable energy goals

The Netherlands is the farthest away from achieving its renewable energy goals of any European Union country. Statistics Netherlands concluded in a comparative study between the Netherlands and other EU Member States. In 2017, only 6.6 percent of all energy generated in the Netherlands came from renewable sources, RTL Nieuws reports. Only Luxembourg is more reliant on fossil fuels than the Netherlands, with 6.4 percent of its energy coming from renewable sources. Sweden is the European Leader on clean energy with 54 percent of its power being generated from renewable sources. *[NL Times, May 9, 2019]*

### DOMESTIC POLITICS

#### Turkey Orders New Election for Istanbul Mayor, in Setback for Opposition

Turkey's electoral authorities wiped away a crushing defeat for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, ordering a rerun of the race for mayor of Istanbul won by the opposition and heightening the prospect of social unrest and a new economic crisis. The decision by the High Election Council was immediately condemned by the opposition party as a capitulation to Mr. Erdogan and a blow to the democratic foundations of the country, which have drifted closer to authoritarianism under his 18 years in power. *[The New York Times, May 6, 2019]*

#### Germany Struggles to Find Right Approach to Populists

German members of civil society are struggling to determine how best to deal with supporters of the AfD, a party with racists and rabble-rousers within its ranks. Not only in schools, universities, churches and associations- it is a challenge to deal with these members as the party that happens to be represented in every state parliament in the country and in the federal parliament in Berlin, the Bundestag. In the 1980s, labor unions belonging to the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) adopted what they called "incompatibility measures" that were directed against extremist far-right political parties and which are still in place today. The measures allow the trade union to eject any member who also belongs to the National Democratic Party (NPD), an anti-Semitic and xenophobic party whose members glorify Nazis. Some local union chapters have begun applying this rule to AfD members, as well. So far, though, no such decision has been made at the state or national level. *[Der Spiegel, May 10, 2019]*

#### Greek PM Tsipras wins confidence vote weeks before EU election

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras won a confidence vote, weeks before European Parliament elections that will be a first test of his government's re-election chances in national polls this autumn. The leftist premier turned a censure motion against one of his ministers into a confidence vote this week. The final vote count showed 153 lawmakers backed the government in the 300-seat house. A total of 289 deputies voted. Tsipras' government, whose term ends in October, is trailing the conservative opposition in opinion polls. The EU vote on May 26 will be held in parallel with local elections. *[Reuters, May 10, 2019]*

#### New survey shows more Catalans reject independence movement than support it

Rejection of the Catalan independence movement has risen by 4.5 points in the northeastern Spanish region in the last two months, according to an opinion poll published by the regional government's Opinion Studies Center (CEO). A total of 48.6% of respondents to the CEO's latest survey responded negatively to the idea of secession from Spain, compared to 44.1% in March. *[El Pais, May 10, 2019]*

#### French Yellow Vests weaker but still going at six-month mark

France's Yellow Vest demonstrations drew a lower turnout and drifted away from Paris to smaller cities, suggesting the movement is weakening as it hits the six-month mark. Police estimated 18,600 people took to the streets around France, including 1,200 in the capital, on the movement's 26th Saturday of protests, AFP reported, citing the interior ministry. As long as the unrest continues, Macron faces a looming political test. His Republic on the Move Party narrowly trails the far-right National Rally party of Marine Le Pen in the European Union parliamentary elections on May 26, according to a Harris Interactive poll. *[Bloomberg, May 12, 2019]*

#### Polish Nationalists demonstrate against U.S. pressure over Holocaust claims

Thousands of Polish nationalists have marched to the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, protesting that the U.S. is putting pressure on Poland to compensate Jews whose families lost property during the Holocaust. The protesters included far-right groups and their supporters. They said the United States has no right to interfere in Polish affairs and that the U.S. government is putting "Jewish interests" over the interests of Poland.

The nationalists say that Poland was a major victim of Nazi Germany during World War II and that it is not fair to ask Poland to compensate Jewish victims when Poland has never received adequate compensation from Germany. *[Haaretz, May 11, 2019]*

### JEWISH COMMUNITIES

#### Poll Finds Deep Divisions Among Ukrainian Jews on Threat of Anti-Semitism

In the largest poll of Ukrainian Jews conducted in 15 years, nearly one fifth of 900 respondents (17 percent) said that anti-Semitism has increased in the country, while another fifth (21 percent) said the opposite. In the poll, commissioned by the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress this year, another 23 percent of respondents said it was too hard to say whether there has been an increase anti-Semitism. Thirty-six percent of respondents said the level of anti-Semitism has not changed. *[Haaretz, May 11, 2019]*

#### Antisemitism 'calling into question future of Jewish life in Europe'

The future of Jewish life in Europe is being called into question by rising antisemitism, according to an analysis of global attacks and abuse. Jews in many countries around the world feel an "increasing sense of emergency", said Moshe Kantor, the president of the European Jewish Congress, launching the 2018 Kantor Center report on global antisemitism on Wednesday. The analysis by the organisation, which represents Jewish communities in Europe, found an increase in 2018 in almost all forms of antisemitism, with the number of major violent incidents rising by 13%, from 342 to 387. *[The Guardian, May 1, 2019]*

Download PDF

Subscribe



המכון למחקרי ביטחון לאומי | תל אביב | 40 ביזנר 40 | 03-6400400

spam unsuspicious

שולח באמצעות תוכנת ActiveTrail