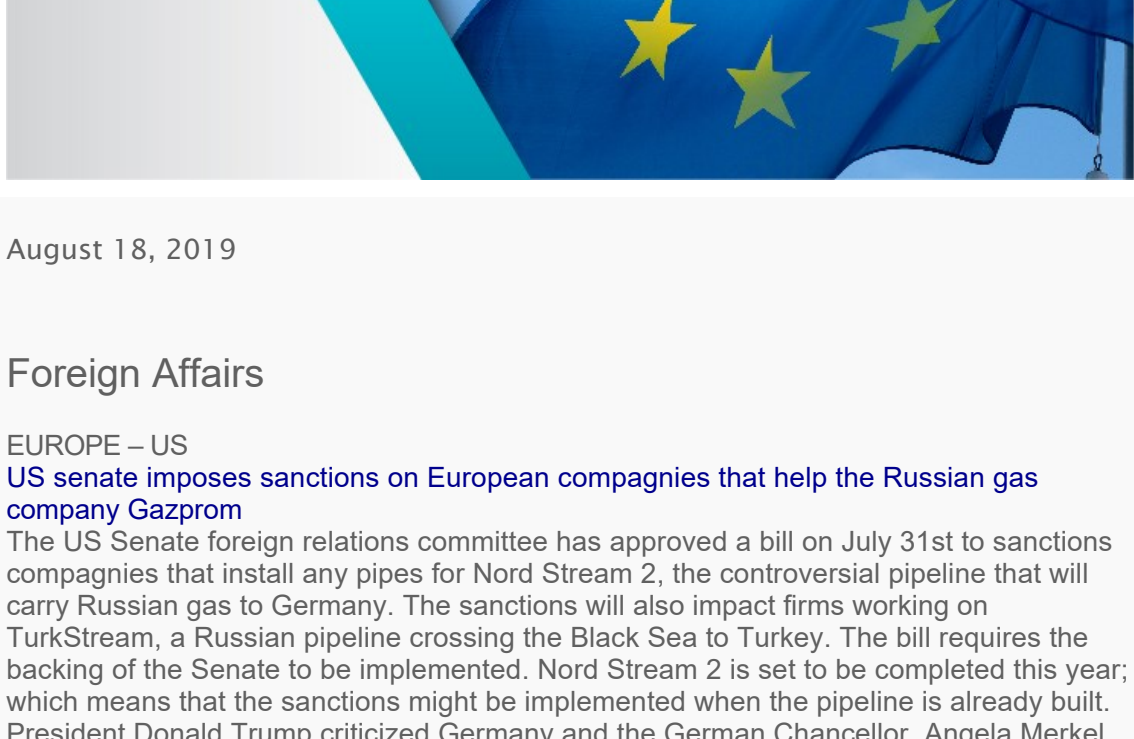
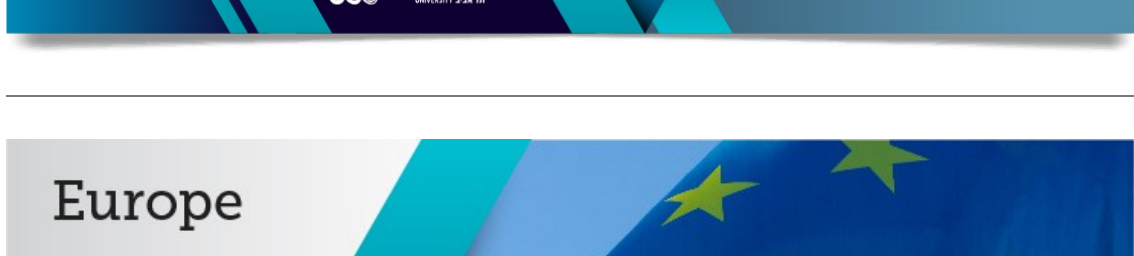




August 18, 2019

Foreign Affairs

EUROPE – US
US senate imposes sanctions on European compaigns that help the Russian gas company Gazprom
The US Senate foreign relations committee has approved a bill on July 31st to sanctions compaigns that install any pipes for Nord Stream 2, the controversial pipeline that will carry Russian gas to Germany. The sanctions will also impact firms working on TurkStream, a Russian pipeline crossing the Black Sea to Turkey. The bill requires the backing of the Senate to be implemented. Nord Stream 2 is set to be completed this year; which means that the sanctions might be implemented when the pipeline is already built. President Donald Trump criticized Germany and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, for backing the Nord Stream 2 project that will provide money to Russia.
[Financial Times, July 31rd, 2019]

France and U.S division over Iran exposed
The U.S president Donald Trump accused the French President Emmanuel Macron to send "mixed signals" to Iran after Mr Macron allegedly invited Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to the G7 summit in France. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian responded that "On Iran, France speaks as a sovereign nation". France seeks to persuade Iran to comply to the JCPOA and oppose the US economic sanctions and "maximum pressure" approach.
[Reuters, August 9th]

U.S. National Security Adviser supports no-deal Brexit
The U.S National Security Adviser John Bolton said he would enthusiastically support a no-deal Brexit. He indicated that the U.S would be willing to sign a sector by sector free-trade agreement to ultimately reach a comprehensive trade agreement covering all trading goods and services. John Bolton also stressed that Britain should align more closely with America's stance on Iran and on Huawei's involvement in 5G telecom networks. Donald Trump and Boris Johnson have shared multiple phone calls since the latter became Prime Minister. The two leaders are likely to meet at the G7 Summit in Biarritz at the end of August.
[Politico, 13th August 2019]

EUROPE – RUSSIA
Hungary allows transit of Russian military shipment
The Hungarian government allowed the transit of Russian military vehicles through its airspace, in spite of EU sanctions against Moscow. Russia has delivered 10 armored patrol vehicles to a military base in Serbia by plane through Hungarian airspace after Romania blocked the shipment. The Hungarian government argued that it allowed the shipment to pass since the vehicles were transported in civilian plane and not in a military one. The Hungarian government has strong ties with the Kremlin and has taken a strong interest in Serbia. The ties between Viktor Orban and Vladimir Putin have created tensions between Western European states and Hungary.
[Politico, 31st July, 2019]

France and Germany condemn Russia protest crackdown
Berlin and Paris condemned Russia for arresting 828 peaceful protesters in the streets of Moscow on August 3rd. Protests have taken place in the Russian capital these last weekends after the authorities excluded opposition candidates from running in local elections. More than 50,000 people took part in a protest against the authorities on August 10th. France issued a statement where it "calls on Russia to immediately free the people incarcerated in recent days and to conform to its commitments as a member of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. All the independent candidates, but one, that aimed to participate in the elections are currently sitting in jail.
[Le Monde, 4th August 2019]

A look at Russia's FDI
The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published a report on foreign direct investment into Russia. The three major investing countries are the U.S., which accounts for 8.9% of the total accumulated investment, Germany and the United Kingdom. The amount of investments from the West, as evaluated by UNCTAD, are multiples times greater than the figures provided by Russia's Central Bank. It underlines the extend of Western investments in Russia, despite sanctions imposed on Moscow after the annexation of Crimea.
[Riddle, August 2nd, 2019]

EUROPE – EAST ASIA
China ceases cooperation with French police
China announced at the end of July that it would end all police cooperation with France. The cooperation between the two countries is necessary for France in the combat against counterfeiting. The Chinese decision was taken after France granted political asylum to the wife of the former Interpol president, Meng Hongwei. In September 2018, Meng Hongwei vanished into custody while visiting China. Months after Meng's disappearance, Chinese prosecutors filed charges against him, accusing him of abuse of power and taking bribes.
[Le Monde, August 3rd, 2019]

Germany and China clash over lawmaker's visit
China declared it would refuse to let a group of German MP visit the country. Beijing refuses to welcome Margarete Bause, a member of the Green Party, who has repeatedly called out human rights abuses in China. The Bundestag committee has declared that it is "inconceivable that China gets to decide who participates in committee visits by the German Bundestag. China argues that it has the right to reject uninvited people. The issue underlines a dilemma faced by Western countries, seeking to cultivate economic ties with Beijing while defending human rights. The standoff illustrates China's growing aggressiveness on the international stage. China feels it can reject more strongly and aggressively than before criticism from abroad, as it operates from a position of force and is aware of Europe's will to diversify its relations in midst of tensions with the U.S.
[Politico, 13th August, 2019]

EUROPE – MIDDLE EAST
U.K. joins U.S.-led effort to protect ships in Strait of Hormuz
Britain has joined a U.S.-led mission to secure ships travelling through the straits of Hormuz from Iranian attacks. Britain first opposed the idea of joining its maritime forces with the United States and wished to create a European-led task force. Britain's decision to join the American-led effort was an acknowledgment that its efforts to create the European maritime security coalition had not yet been successful. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has made cooperation with the U.S a priority as he wishes to sign a free-trade agreement with Washington after the Brexit. However, unlike Washington, London remains committed to saving the 2015 nuclear deal
[New York Times, August 5th, 2019]

Iran increases its pressure on Europe to devise a mechanism that will act as economic relief to US sanctions
Iran announced on August 5th that it will give Europe one-month to rescue it from economically devastating U.S sanctions. Tehran will officially leave the JCPOA agreements if Europe fails to deliver. The French and Iranian president discussed possibilities for saving the deal. Emmanuel Macron invited Hassan Rohani to attend the G-7 meeting in Biarritz, but the Iranian leader declined the invitation. Emmanuel Macron also evoked the possibility for Europe of buying Iran's oil as well as of establishing a \$15 billion credit line for Tehran as a way around US sanctions.
[Al-Monitor, August, 6th 2019]

UN concerned about France illegal transfer of jihadist to Iraq
Agnes Callamard, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions at the U.N, indicated that France may have played a role in the transfer of seven French citizens from Syria to Iraq. If France's role in the transfer of the French jihadists is confirmed, it would be a violation of international treaties as it is illegal for France to transfer its citizens to countries where they risk death sentences. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has rejected the accusations and indicated that the Agnes Callamard's claims are unfounded.
[Le Monde, 12th August, 2019]

EUROPE – ISRAEL
Israeli natural gas could change Europe's stance toward Israel
The Leviathan gas field located off the coast of Haifa might be a game changer in the Israeli-European relations. The European Commission has contributed up to \$39 million to the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, which will explore the possibility of building a 1,200-mile pipeline connecting the hydrocarbon reserve to Europe via Cyprus and Crete. Israel's potential for exports will afford it new leverage over other countries, notably the energy-hungry member states of the European Union. Israeli gas is highly attractive alternative source for Europe as the bloc aims to reduce its energetic dependence on Russia. Even a partial replacement of Russian energy with Israeli supplies could have the effect of dampening EU pressure on Israel over settlements issue.
[Foreign Policy, August 6th 2019]

Internal Affairs

EU POLITICS
UN warns that ISIS could target Europe before the end of the year
A UN report warned that ISIS could launch terrorist attacks in Europe; despite the group's military defeat in Syria. The report indicates that ISIS were monitoring political developments in Western European nations and considering attacks that would inflame domestic divisions. While many European jihadists have been killed in Syria or Iraq, up to 40% of the European citizens that have joined the terrorist organization are unaccounted for. Many jihadists are trying to come back to Europe following the defeat of ISIS. Furthermore, the report underlines that the radicalization of people held in Europe's prison remains a "critical concern" as the first wave of returnees who had been jailed were expected to be released in the coming year.
[New York Times, Aug. 3st 2019]

European Commission's biannual Eurobarometer public opinion survey
According to an EU public opinion poll, migration remains the main concern for citizens across the European Union. Thirty-four percent of respondents view migration as the most pressing problem, down six points from last year. Climate change is the second most important concern for respondents. The poll also indicates that trust in the EU institution has reached its highest level since 2014 and that 45% of respondents view the EU as positive.
[Deutsche Welle, 6th August, 2019]

DOMESTIC POLITICS
Scotland would vote for independence from the UK
According to a poll, up to 46 percent of Scottish would vote for independence from the UK and 43 percent said they would vote against. A large majority of the population in Scotland voted to stay in the EU at the 2016 referendum on Brexit. They are opposed to a "no-deal" Brexit; an issue not ruled out by the new British PM Boris Johnson. The survey is the first since March 2017 showing support among Scots for breaking up the union. Scottish government can only stage an official referendum if the UK government gives it the powers under section 30 of the Scotland Act. Johnson has said he would refuse to do so. The First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon has warned Boris Johnson against blocking a referendum on Scottish independence.
[The Guardian, 5th August, 2019]

Matteo Salvini seeks to trigger snap vote
Matteo Salvini declared that the ruling coalition, formed by his party and the 5Star Movement no longer has the support of the population. The leader of the Italian far-right party League, Matteo Salvini, called a vote of confidence in Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. Matteo Salvini seeks to trigger snap vote to be installed as leader of the country. Italian lawmakers will vote on August 20th the motion of no-confidence which will force Giuseppe Conte to resign if successful. The collapse of the government would lead to the organization of elections as early as October.
[Politico, August 9th, 2019]

The rise of the far-right in Sweden
The neo-Nazi party Sweden Democrats has captured 18 percent of vote in last-year elections. It has demonized migrants for political gains. Sweden has accepted more refugees per capita than any other European country. The popularity of the party is in part linked to international disinformation campaign, from Russia and far-right groups, devoted to the amplification of far-right, anti-immigrant passions and political forces. Six of Sweden's alt-right sites have drawn advertising revenue from a network of online auto-parts stores based in Germany and owned by four businessmen from Russia and Ukraine, three of whom have adopted German-sounding surnames. It has reported that Russian television crews tried to pay immigrant youths "to make trouble" in front of the cameras to vehiculate an anti-migrant narrative.
[New York Times, August 10, 2019]

Spain still no closer to forming government
Acting Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sanchez of the Socialist Party (PSOE) fell short of an absolute majority in election held in April. Consequently, he needs the support of other parties to continue as Spain's prime minister. Sánchez failed to secure either an absolute majority or a simple majority in his first investiture bid in July, after negotiations broke down with anti-austerity group Unidas Podemos. The second vote will be held in September. Sanchez is trying to win the support of Podemos by reaching an agreement on government programs and offered the party a deputy prime minister spot. If Sánchez fails to be invested at a second potential vote in September, Spain will head toward fresh elections in November. It would be the fourth time that Spanish citizens have been called to the polls to choose a government in four years, and the fifth election held this year alone.
[El Pais, 7th August 2019]

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