



December 8th, 2019

Foreign Affairs

EUROPE – US

[NATO summit scarred by sparing leaders](#)

The 70th anniversary of NATO summit in London was marked by tension as leaders publicly criticised each other at the summit. Central to the disputes were French President Macron's criticism of the current state of NATO as well as a video which purportedly showed Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau mocking US President Trump. These episodes overshadowed a summit which policy-wise appears to have been relatively fruitful, as an updated defence plan for the Baltic states and Poland was approved despite fears Turkey would veto it unless allies agreed to brand the Kurdish YPG militia a terror group. *[Financial Times, December 4, 2019]*

[Six more countries join Trump-busting Iran barter group](#)

Six more northern European countries have joined the UK, France and Germany's Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges designed to circumvent US sanctions against trade with Iran by avoiding the use of the dollar. The admission of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden represents "a clear expression of our continuing commitment to the JCPOA" the trip stated. *[The Guardian, December 1, 2019]*

EUROPE – MIDDLE EAST

[Turkey deports Islamic State fighters](#)

Turkey has begun fast-tracking the deportation of foreign IS fighters and sympathisers back to Europe. Since its invasion of northern Syria, Turkey has captured a further 287 people linked to IS, adding to the 1,500 or so foreign fighters already help in Turkish prisons and deportation centres. *[The Economist, November 28, 2019]*

[Turkey's Erdogan calls Macron "brain-dead" over NATO comments](#)

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has hit back against French President Macron's criticism of Turkey's treatment of its NATO allies. Mr Macron had warned Turkey that it could not expect support from NATO allies if it continued to carry out military operations in Syria without consultation or coordination, resulting in Mr Erdogan's retort. Turkey also threatened to refuse to sign off on defence plans for other NATO members, such as the Baltic states, unless the alliance backs Ankara's stance that the YPG Kurdish militia is a terrorist group, but eventually backed down. *[Financial Times, November 29, 2019]*

EUROPE – ISRAEL

[11 EU countries change their voting pattern at the UN in support of Israel](#)

Almost a dozen EU countries abruptly changed their voting pattern at the UN when they opposed an annual resolution expressing support for a pro-Palestinian UN agency traditionally critical of the Jewish state. Germany, Czechia, Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania and Slovakia were also joined by Brazil and Colombia in voting against the resolution for the first time, which nevertheless still passed comfortably with 87 "yes" votes, 54 "no" votes and 23 abstentions. *[Times of Israel, December 4, 2019]*

[PA urges all EU members to recognise Palestinian state](#)

The PA has called on the EU to "collectively recognise" a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Increased its efforts to convince all EU members to recognise a Palestinian state, PA officials have been waging a diplomatic offensive since US President Donal Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital. *[Jerusalem Post, December 1, 2019]*

Internal Affairs

EU POLITICS

[The new European Commission is approved](#)

Ursula von der Leyen new European Commission took office on the 1st of December, one month later than planned. Ms von der Leyen has declared her commission will be a "geopolitical commission" with new initates on defence, migration and industrial policy. She has also promised a flurry of early initiatives, including on pay and the human and ethical implications of artificial intelligence, and a European Green Deal to tackle the climate crisis. *[The Economist, November 28, 2019]*

[EU Parliament declares climate emergency](#)

The EU Parliament has declared a global "climate and environmental emergency", joining dozens of other parliaments and local authorities as it urged all EU countries to commit to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The vote passed relatively comfortably with 429 votes in favour, 225 against and 19 abstentions, although MEP's across the spectrum warned against making solely symbolic gestures. *[The Guardian, November 28, 2019]*

[Christine Lagarde calls for more public investment in first ECB speech](#)

The new President of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde, has called on European governments to boost innovation and growth with higher rates of public investment, in her first major speech as president of the ECB. She also stated that the ongoing US/China tariff war should be grasped by European governments as an opportunity to build a stronger internal market. *[The Guardian, November 22, 2019]*

DOMESTIC POLITICS

[London Bridge terror attacker kills two](#)

A jihadi terrorist who had been released from prison halfway through a 16-year sentence for terrorism offences stabbed two people to death and wounded three others in the British capital. The terrorist was eventually tackled to the ground by members of the public using a fire extinguisher and a Narwhal Tusk, before being shot by police. London Bridge was the site of another devastating terror attack in 2017 in which eight people were killed. *[BBC News, December 1, 2019]*

[UK election campaign enters the final stage of historic election](#)

Politicians in the UK are making their final push for votes in a generation-defining vote on Thursday. Polling suggests Boris Johnson's ruling Conservative Party is on course to win a narrow majority in parliament which would allow them to fulfil their pledge of "getting Brexit done" by the end of January. The opposition Labour party is promising a second referendum on leaving the European Union in addition to a radical expansion in government spending and nationalisation but has struggled to close the gap significantly whilst minor parties have also struggled. *[BBC News, December 8, 2019]*

[German SPD's new leadership casts doubt over Merkel coalition](#)

The SPD has elected Norbert Walter-Borjans and Saskia Eskan as joint leaders with 53.06% of the vote, casting doubt on the its coalition with Chancellor Merkel's CDU. The new leaders want to renegotiate the coalition deal between the parties to focus more on social justice, investment and climate policies, emphasising that they want the CDU to agree to a higher minimum wage. *[Reuters, November 30, 2019]*

[Italian police arrest 19 and seize weapons from Nazi group](#)

Police in Italy arrested 19 far-right extremists across Italy who wanted to form a new Nazi party in Italy. The group had been trying to create a xenophobic and antisemitic movement named "Italian National socialist workers party" and had stockpiled weapons as well as Nazi propaganda, and were particularly targeting Jewish members of parliament for the centre-left Democratic Party. *[La Repubblica, November 28, 2019]*

[Malta Prime Minister resigns in wake of murdered journalist investigation](#)

Prime Minister Joseph Muscat has announced his resignation after seven years in power following an investigation into murdered journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia that linked the prime suspect, wealthy businessman Yorgen Fenech, to Muscat's chief of staff Keith Schembri. In Fenech's testimony before being charged for allegedly masterminding the 2017 killing, he alleged Schembri had given him updates on the investigation throughout the case, piling further pressure on Muscat to resign. *[The Guardian, December 5, 2019]*

[France nationwide strike brings country to a standstill](#)

French President Emmanuel Macron's attempt to reform the pension system in France has been met by staunch resistance by unions and the public, as hundreds of thousands of protesters have taken to the streets and key transport services have been suspended. Despite this opposition, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe insisted that the government would not abandon the plan although it was prepared to bring it in more gradually. *[France 24, December 7, 2019]*

JEWISH COMMUNITIES

[French lawmakers pass resolution calling Israel hatred a form of antisemitism](#)

The lower house of France's parliament has approved a draft resolution that calls hate of Israel a form of antisemitism and calls on the government to join other European nations in adopting the definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The resolution was backed by 154 lawmakers whilst 74 opposed it, and states that some forms of vitriol against Israel, including comparing it to Nazi Germany, are examples of antisemitism, although criticising Israel's policies is not. *[Times of Israel, December 3, 2019]*

[Chief Rabbi attacks Labour Party](#)

The Chief Rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth, Ephraim Mirvis, delivered a scathing rebuke of the UK Labour Party, claiming "a new poison – sanctioned from the very top – has taken root" in the party. His intervention just a few weeks from a general election is unprecedented in British politics, as he urged Britons to "vote with their conscience" in the upcoming election. *[BBC News, November 26, 2019]*

[Merkel expresses 'shame' during Auschwitz visit, vows to fight anti-Semitism](#)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has vowed to fight rising racism and antisemitism in her first visit as chancellor to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Holocaust memorial. Chancellor Merkel brought a 60-million-euro donation from the German federal government to help conserve the site where around 1 million Jews were murdered during the holocaust. *[Reuters, December 6, 2019]*

[Holocaust memorial with "victim ashes" erected in Berlin](#)

German activists have installed a memorial outside the Bundestag with the purported soil samples of the remains of Holocaust Jewish victims, in a warning to Chancellor Merkel about working with the far-right party Alternative for Germany. Nevertheless, the act has caused controversy in the Jewish community, which although welcoming political protests to combat the rise of the far-right, criticised the latest stunt for violating Jewish religious law with regards to the burial of the deceased. *[Deutsche Welle, December 2, 2019]*

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