

# China marks 68th National Day

Source: Xinhua | 2017-10-01 | Editor: Yamei

BEIJING, Oct. 1 (Xinhua) -- At day break, more than 115,000 people from across China gathered at the Tian'anmen Square at the heart of Beijing to watch the raising of the National Flag.

Sunday marked the 68th anniversary of the founding of People's Republic of China.

At 6:07 a.m., the national flag was escorted by guards into the square. The crowd stood in silent as the national anthem "March of the Volunteers" was played, and the five-star national flag was raised. When the flag spread out at the top of the flagpole, 10,000 Peace Doves were released into the sky.

At the backdrop was a 17-meter-tall giant display in the shape of a floral basket, which holds flowers and fruits such as persimmons, pomegranates, apples, peonies and Chinese roses. It symbolizes a thriving and prosperous country.

Watching the national flag raising ceremony at the Tian'anmen Square has been a way of Chinese celebrating the National Day.

Some joined the gathering for sightseeing, and others came to express the feeling of patriotism.

"We really got emotional when we sang the national anthem on this occasion," said Yang Yuanyang, a freshman from the Beijing Information Science and Technology University.

According to China's national anthem law which took effect on

Sunday, the national anthem can only be allowed at formal political gatherings, including flag raising ceremonies and major celebrations.

The National Day is celebrated with a week-long holiday, while the Chinese traditional Mid-Autumn Festival or Moon Cake Festival, featuring family gathering, falls on Oct. 4 this year.

Major parks in Beijing have been decorated with around 1.6 million potted flowers of 150 different species, according to Beijing Municipal Administration Center of Parks.

Traffic information from the Ministry of Transport showed that traffic on highways in Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai became heavy from 6 a.m. on Sunday morning, as holiday goers rushed to scenic spots.

On Sunday, the scenic area of the landmark Badaling section of the Great Wall in northern Beijing was opened earlier than normal days to welcome holiday tourists.

Badaling, where the oldest sections of the Great Wall have been dated back to the Northern Qi Dynasty (550 - 557), is decorated with over 100,000 flowerpots to add the festive air for the National Day.

The ancient Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal opened its first transport hub on Sunday, marking the start of a modern transport era on the 2,500-km manmade waterway, the longest in the world.

With the hub in operation in Hangzhou, capital of east China's Zhejiang Province, passengers can travel by boat for

sightseeing on the Grand Canal and conveniently transfer from water traffic to other road transport means.

Over 1,000 km of the Grand Canal has been recognized as a world heritage site in 2014.

## News Analysis: Rising populism in Europe calls for addressing root causes

Source: Xinhua | 2017-09-29 | Editor: yan

by Ren Ke, Liu Xiang, Han Bing

BERLIN/PARIS, Sept. 28 (Xinhua) -- The gains made by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party in Germany's recent parliamentary election indicates populism is continuing to surge across Europe, a phenomenon that needs to be addressed by politicians and society.

Rising from an array of crises -- the global financial crisis, euro crisis and the refugee crisis -- populism has deep-rooted causes. How established political parties address them will determine the future development of the phenomenon.

### POPULISM ACROSS EUROPE

The AfD gained 12.6 percent of votes in the federal election on Sunday, becoming the third largest party in the German parliament, the Bundestag, in only four years since its inception.

Although the result reflected the opinion polls before the election, German society was still surprised by the AfD's success.

Just after the poll results were announced, protests broke out across Germany against the party, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), together won the most votes with 33 percent, admitted that the emergence of the AfD was a big problem.

Rising from the euro crisis in 2013, the AfD was founded by academics and professors. But after the refugee crisis in 2015, it shifted from a conservative party focusing on economic issues to a far-right national conservative one concentrating on immigration and social issues.

The AfD has links with the Front National (FN) in France, also an anti-immigration and euroskeptic far-right populist party led by Marine Le Pen, who entered the second round of the presidential election this year.

Although Le Pen was defeated by Emmanuel Macron, who went on to become the president, the FN gained over one third of votes.

In Austria, the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) has also become popular in recent years. It has retained a high level of support -- about 30 percent -- enjoying a lead over the social democrats and the People's Party.

Over the past two decades, the FPÖ has shifted from an anti-Semitic and anti-immigration party to one against a

specific religion.

Though it has become more moderate than before in a bid to prepare for a future coalition government, the FPO is still different from other parties, most notably in that it has called for a referendum, such as the one carried out in Switzerland in 2014, strictly limiting immigration and guarding national borders.

## DEEP-ROOTED CAUSES

Social problems arising from crises and the democracy deficit created space for the rise of populism.

Although the German economy is growing rapidly, German society has become more unequal since the reunification of the two Germanies in 1990. Where wealth is concerned, Germany is significantly less equal than its European Union (EU) peers, with the richer households controlling a bigger share of assets than in most other West European states.

According to a survey by German media, the lack of social justice has become the second biggest social problem in the country, after the refugee issue.

"Prices are climbing, the rent is increasing, but our salaries are not increasing as quickly as living costs," Stephen Norman, a 52-year-old repair worker in Berlin, said. Norman had voted for the AfD in Sunday's election.

"I'm heavily taxed ... All Germans are heavily taxed, but we don't want to use our money to support refugees. That is unfair!" he said.

Other AfD supporters also said they did not want to rescue the poor southern European countries with their hard-earned money, which they were giving to the government as tax.

Not only did both the rich and poor vote for the AfD, but also people from different regions. About 27 percent of male voters in eastern Germany, the least developed region in the country, cast their ballots for the AfD.

The situation in France is similar. The rust belt of Lorraine in northeastern France, suffering economic stagnation, has become a major FN stronghold.

The merger of established parties has also paved the way for right-wing populism to represent some groups of people in society.

Oliver Marchart, a political scientist at the University of Vienna, said there is a democracy deficit because many established political parties have failed to represent the interests of all people.

Bastian Behrens, 43, voted for the AfD because he found that Germany's established parties had become almost identical.

"They used to be very different from each other, but the Union has turned left. They are no longer conservatives," Behrens said. "I hope the AfD can restore the conservatives' tradition in Germany."

It is widely believed in Germany that the CDU-CSU bloc introduced a number of social democratic policies which gained the support of traditional social democrats but lost many

conservatives.

## AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

With the other parties in the Bundestag refusing to ally with the AfD, the populist party cannot become a part of the government. Experts believe that the FN too will not be able to win the future presidential campaigns in France.

Although populist parties' influence in politics is restricted, their growth relies on whether the current social problems can be properly addressed.

Observers believe that in times of great challenges and doubts about the previous courses of major projects like the European integration, as well as a lot of social uncertainty and insecurity about the future, populism's causes need to be addressed by politicians and society.

Jean-Yves Camus, a researcher at the Paris-based French Institute for Strategic and International Affairs, told Xinhua that populism is a political attitude, more an ideology of favoring direct democracy rather than representative democracy.

Representative democracy, the traditional parties, and even the notion of a party, are experiencing a deep crisis in Europe.

In the case of Germany, Dr. Hajo Funke from the Free University of Berlin told Xinhua that the rise of the AfD reflected partly the failure of the grand coalition between Merkel's party and the Social Democratic Party.

"They should have done more for social issues, especially

taking care of the unemployed, the single-parent family and children," Funke said.

Like globalization, the grand picture of European integration failed to benefit all the groups in society equally, and the difference between countries in terms of development and culture became more prominent after the expansion of the EU.

All this should be tackled by Europe's political elites.

Marchart of the University of Vienna, who is studying the phenomenon of liberal anti-populism, said Western media and established parties, who are against populist parties, are opposed to other options outside the current mainstream new liberals.

How to revive the traditional parties is another issue that needs to be addressed by Merkel, Macron and other European leaders.

However, experts also say that the rise of populism should not be exaggerated. After hundreds of years of evolution in democratic politics, and especially after the miseries of two World Wars and Nazism, it is impossible for history to repeat itself.

"People can protest against the refugee or euro crisis, but they will not need a party which will endanger a stable democracy," Funke asserted.

# France's Macron presents his receipt for Europe amid mounting populism

Source: Xinhua | 2017-09-27| Editor: yan

PARIS, Sept. 26 (Xinhua) -- French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday rose the curtain on his vision for Europe where populism was building momentum, calling for closer ties to build joint defense force, common fiscal policy and coordinate efforts to tackle migration crisis and climate change.

"I'm here to speak about Europe. Some say again! Yes again," Macron said. "The Europe we know is too weak, too slow, too inefficient, but Europe alone can give us a capacity to act in the world in the face of the great contemporary challenges," he added.

Speaking at the Sorbonne University in Paris, two days after the far-rightist scored an unprecedented gain in Germany's election, the French head of state warned about the surge of nationalism advocates.

"Europe today is more fragile, exposed to nationalism, protectionism. They say they are legitimate because they exploit people's fear. But, I will let nothing, nothing to those who promise hatred, division and turning on nationalism," Macron told the crowd.

In order to overcome this challenge, "the only path that assures our future is the rebuilding of a Europe that is sovereign, united and democratic," the French president noted.

Instead, he proposed "at the beginning of the next decade,

Europe must have a common intervention force, a common defense budget and a common doctrine to act."

"In defense matters, our objective must be Europe's autonomous capacity to act as a complement to NATO," he added.

Painting his vision for Europe, Macron also called on his European partners to set up an intelligence academy "to strengthen the ties between our countries through training and exchange" and a "European prosecutor's office against organized crime and terrorism."

"Faced with the international terrorism, the Europe of security must be our shield," he stressed.

At the economic and financial level, Macron urged coordinated moves to make the single-currency bloc "the heart of Europe's global economic power."

"Europe needs the instruments to make it an area of growth and stability, including a budget allowing it to fund common investments and ensure stabilization in the event of economic shocks," he said.

Besides, he wants to see the appointment of a eurozone finance minister to coordinate fiscal policies of the 28 member countries.

"The fundamental stake is not a mechanism that magically solves all the problems. The challenge is to reduce unemployment which hits again the eurozone. It's a long-term economic and politic strategy that we need," he said.

"We need convergence and stability by national reforms, political coordination and common budget," he added.

In his receipt for Europe, Macron also proposed reinforced cooperation on immigration, border protection, corporate tax and energy transition in addition to innovation of economy.

## Macron's EU reform proposals receive mixed reactions from Germany

Source: Xinhua | 2017-09-27 | Editor: Lu Hui

BERLIN, Sept. 27 (Xinhua) -- Ambitious proposals for a reform of a European Union (EU) made by French President Emmanuel Macron have drawn mixed reactions from senior German politicians on Wednesday.

Angela Merkel's (CDU) official spokesperson Steffen Seibert told the press that the chancellor welcomed Macron's suggestions and shared his "principle finding" that the EU was in need of reform.

According to Seibert, the French president had delivered "a lot of material" which needed to be debated at an informal meeting of EU heads of state in Tallinn, Estonia on Thursday. The chancellery's spokesperson refused to comment on the substance of Macron's speech, noting merely that the details still needed to be discussed.

Speaking at Sorbonne University on Wednesday, Macron called for a "profound transformation" of the EU. Among others he

suggested more military cooperation, the establishment of a shared finance minister, budget and parliament for the Eurozone, the foundation of an EU-wide asylum agency, as well as new taxes on technology firms such as Facebook and Apple.

In many regards, the proposals are far more ambitious than changes envisioned by Merkel.

Seibert stressed in Berlin that there could be no doubt about the "absolutely pro-European" outlook of the chancellor which she would retain in a new German government. He pointed to a recently-outlined joint German, French, Italian and Spanish initiative to create a new framework for taxation in the European digital economy.

The German Free Democratic Party (FDP) was quick to voice skepticism over Macron's ideas, however. Senior FDP politician and Member of European Parliament (MEP) Alexander Graf Lambsdorff warned that Europe would not be strengthened by creating new budgets and "reducing the incentive for sound fiscal policy."

Lambsdorff said he was concerned that Macron placed too much trust in the state and new taxes, expressing the view that a Eurozone budget would create "exactly the wrong incentives." Instead, the FDP wanted to place the focal point of reforms on the break-up of monopolies, privatization, and reducing bureaucracy to enhance the Eurozone's international competitiveness. Nevertheless, Lambsdorff described Macron's speech as brave and praised his proposals on refugee policy.

In contrast to the FDP, Green party (Gruene) leader Cem Oezdemir embraced most of Macron's reform proposals.

The strong Union desired by the French president was also in Germany's interest, Oezdemir told the public broadcaster ZDF. He urged his fellow German citizens to join forces with France and other European partners to realize some of the "exciting ideas" outlined by Macron.

Oezdemir was impressed by what he described as the "unusual" French demand to strengthen Brussels' role in European politics and supported calls to coordinate fiscal policy between Eurozone countries more closely. Whether there was a need for a Eurozone parliament alongside the European Parliament was a question of details which could still be sorted out.

The CDU/CSU, FDP and Green parties are widely anticipated to form a so-called "Jamaica" governing coalition following Sunday's national elections in Germany.

FDP leader Christian Lindner has repeatedly stated that rejecting a Eurozone budget and ensuring more fiscal stability in the currency union are conditions for his party joining such a constellation. His comments have hereby drawn attention to the potentially significant implications of ongoing negotiations for the fate of the wider EU and Eurozone.

During his speech, Macron reacted to the FDP's open hostility to his Eurozone reform proposals by saying that he "did not have red lines, only horizons."

# News Analysis: How German vote may affect Italy, next EU country in line for election

Source: Xinhua | 2017-09-27 | Editor: Song Lifang

by Alessandra Cardone

ROME, Sept. 26 (Xinhua) -- Would Germany's elections results affect the political equilibrium in Italy, the next European country to head to election in few months? Italian analysts and media mulled over the issue in the aftermath of the vote held on Sunday, which granted Chancellor Angela Merkel her fourth term in a row.

Merkel's conservative CDU/CSU bloc remained the largest force in the parliament, with 33 percent of the vote. Nonetheless, it suffered its heaviest setback in decades.

An even larger defeat struck the major center-left party, the Social Democrats SPD, which dropped to 20.5 percent from 25.7 percent in the previous election in 2013. The two forces had been leading the country for the past four years through a so-called grand coalition.

As support for mainstream parties weakened -- as already registered in other countries within the European Union (EU) -- anti-immigration and euro-sceptic Alternative fuer Deutschland (AFD) party scored the best result ever for a far-right movement in Germany after World War II. With 12.6 percent of vote, it will enter the parliament for the first time as the third largest force.

Was the same trend likely to repeat itself in Italy, which was going to hold parliamentary elections next spring?

"I think the German vote may indeed affect the next campaign in Italy, in terms of more emphasis given on the need to reform the EU," Federico Niglia, professor of international relations and history with LUISS University in Rome, told Xinhua. "Each political force, of course, would address this issue according to its orientation."

Moderate, pro-European parties would push harder for a reform of some EU policies, in order to better address Italian citizens' needs and worries, Niglia explained.

Their solution for slowing down the populist wave among the electorate (Italian and European) would be to call for "more Europe", not less, but better functioning.

This position would be represented at most by Italy's center-left Democratic Party (PD), which was leading the current coalition government.

On the contrary, euro-sceptic (or simply anti-euro) parties would feel time has come "to give the final push" against the European Union, according to Niglia.

Strongest on this front would be Italy's populist Five Star Movement (M5S) -- currently the largest opposition force, and neck-to-neck with center-left PD in latest opinion polls -- and anti-immigration Northern League party.

The outcome of the German vote would possibly affect Italian parties' strategies in another way, leading business daily Il Sole

24 commented on Tuesday.

"A major topic will be the 'grand coalition', for which the two main German parties (CDU/CSU and SPD) have paid a high price, and especially German Social Democrats," political analyst Lina Palmerini wrote.

This was expected to be the "big taboo" of the Italian campaign, according to Il Sole. "The perspective (of a grand coalition) will be dismissed from both the left and the right, putting both sides in troubles."

It would be difficult for leftist and center-left forces, because it was not yet clear what possible alliance able to govern they could form, Palmerini explained.

As for the center-right, it would struggle as well, considering the "tight negotiations" ongoing between former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's center-right Forza Italia (FI) party and the Northern League.

Whatever steps Italian parties will decide to take, however, some dynamics seen in Germany were to be repeated in Italy's next campaign, according to the head of the European Program with Rome-based Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), Antonio Villafranca.

"The trend towards the weakening of mainstream parties has just emerged in Germany, as it did in other countries in recent years, and it is likely to develop in Italy as well," Villafranca told Xinhua.

"Current opinion polls related to the next general elections

show in fact a condition of wide fragmentation within our political landscape," he explained. "As a result, it will be probably difficult to form a government, whatever side is going to win elections."

## Austria's Kurz kicks off election campaign

Source: Xinhua | 2017-09-24| Editor: Mengjie

VIENNA, Sept. 23 (Xinhua) -- The favorite chancellor candidate for the centre-right People's Party, Sebastian Kurz, kicked off the intensive campaigning phase in Vienna on Saturday ahead of parliament election on Oct. 15.

While Austria does not have a lack of ideas and programs, the conviction to implement them and bring about change is not present, Kurz told some 10,000 supporters at the capital's Wiener Stadthalle.

The 31-year-old foreign minister outlined a seven-point plan to indicate what his governance would look like, including policy-making capacity, putting brakes on debt, compulsory education, lowering taxes, controlled migration, protecting the social welfare system, and a clear allegiance to the European Union.

Kurz's plans would also mean the position of chancellor would have greater powers, more in line with how the role presently exists in neighbouring Germany.

The People's Party leads opinion polls at some 33 percent, while Chancellor Christian Kern's centre-left Social Democrat Party and right populist the Freedom Party have some 24 percent

each, an opinion poll from the weekly magazine Profile showed Saturday.

## **'It's time to talk': EU again urges dialogue in Spain**

2017-10-04 CGTN

The EU executive called again on Wednesday for the Spanish government and Catalan authorities to open dialogue to defuse the sometimes violent confrontation over calls for Catalonia's independence.

"It's time to talk, finding a way out of the impasse, working within the constitutional order of Spain," EU Commission First Vice President Frans Timmermans told an emergency debate in the European Parliament.

Catalonia's leader has vowed to declare independence within days, claiming a mandate from Sunday's referendum which was declared illegal by Madrid and the Spanish courts.

Reflecting the cautiously balanced tone of a formal Commission statement on Monday after images of police violence against voters marked an unauthorized independence referendum on Sunday, Timmermans backed the legal position of Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy but also renewed a call for dialogue.

"None of us want to see violence in our societies. However it is of course a duty for any government to uphold the rule of law and this sometimes does require the proportionate use of force," he said.

He added, "If the law does not give you what you want, you can oppose the law," he said. "You can work to change the law, but you cannot ignore the law. It is fundamental that the constitutions of every one of our member states are upheld and respected."

He insisted that the Commission saw the matter as an internal one for Spain: "That is why the Commission has called on all relevant actors to now move quickly from confrontation to dialogue. All lines of communication must stay open."

Source(s): AFP, Reuters

## **What is the price tag of Spain-Catalonia split?**

By CGTN' s Cyrus Ip 2017-10-04

The EU Commission called last Sunday' s independence vote in Catalonia "illegal" and asked all sides to move from confrontation to dialogue.

More than 90 percent of voters said "yes" to independence. The President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani tweeted on Monday that he had spoken to Spanish PM Mariano Rajoy to inform the debate on the Constitution, rule of law and

fundamental rights in Spain. EU parliamentarians may not be so tongue-tied, but it remains to be seen if this debate will have any effect on Spain.

The vote has brought a major political shake-up in the country. But if taking focus away, the split would have significant consequences on the economy of both sides.

Catalonia is the most prosperous region in Spain. The region only accounts for about 16 percent of Spain's population but makes a significant contribution to the overall Spanish economy, thanks to its prosperous tourism, exports, and manufacturing.

Based on data from the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (Idescat), Catalonia generated almost 224 billion euros (263 billion US dollars) in 2016, 20 percent of Spain's GDP. That's larger than the contribution that California makes to the US economy.

Economists say the split comes with a big price tag for both parties.

"If Catalonia now declares independence and the central government continues on its current course and imposes direct rule, the consequences could be really severe," said Willem Buiter, global chief economist at Citigroup.

As to Spain, tax loss and public finance would be the main concerns.

Spain would suffer an annual loss of about two percent to its GDP if Catalonia would no longer pay taxes to the country, based on statistics by the Spanish central bank (BDE).

Public finance is another concern. Spain's debt reached 1.2 trillion US dollars last year while Catalonia owed 87 billion US dollars, according to BDE.

Catalonia's debt was more than 16 percent of Spain's total and one of the largest in Spain's regions. This aspect, combined with the loss of Catalonia's tax revenues, would be a blow to the Spanish economy.

Moreover, since Catalonia is playing a big role in Spanish economy, economic gains taken away by Catalonia would all dampen the country' s economy.

For Catalonia, transition of export, establishment of its own “state structures” and turmoil of separation would add economic cost inevitably.

Catalonia does not have an automatic right to membership in the EU. Therefore, in order to become a part of the EU, Catalonia must receive a unanimous "yes" from EU members. And that includes Spain, which is unlikely to vote for Catalonia's addition to the union.

Once denied entrance or in case of difficulty joining the EU, the Catalan economy would face large transition costs, as the EU accounted for 65.8 percent of Catalan exports in 2016, according to data from the government of Catalonia.

Catalonia would also pay to create such “state structures” as embassies and central banks. Furthermore, the region may also face a trade boycott from the rest of Spain, as well as economic turmoil due to its separation from the European single currency, and increased tariffs on its goods and services.

Rating agencies have also given Catalonia a low credit score. Last year, S&P downgraded Catalan debt from double B minus to single B plus on “weakening financial management.” It also cited “political tensions” as contributing to its negative outlook on the region.

In a report published at the end of 2016, the rating agency said it considered the region’s financial management to be “very weak” , and pointed to a “weak budgetary performance and very high debt burden.”

Another rating agency Moody has also warned the tension of Catalonia would hit the economy. That means the region isn't able to borrow directly on financial markets and must depend

on loans from the Spanish government.

Earlier this month, Spanish Economy Minister Luis de Guindos claimed that Catalonia could see its economy shrink by 25 to 30 percent and its unemployment double if it splits to form a separate state.

## News Analysis: Brexit negotiations may be held prisoner to UK Conservative Party politics: expert

Source: Xinhua | 2017-09-14 | Editor: Zhou Xin

LONDON, Sept. 14 (Xinhua) -- The negotiations between Britain and the European Union (EU) over Brexit could become a prisoner of the politics of the UK's ruling Conservative Party, according to a leading expert with world's top think tank Chatham House.

As the fourth round of talks between Britain's Brexit negotiator David Davis and EU negotiator Michel Barnier looks set to go ahead on September 25 after a week's postponement, the role of Britain's ruling Conservative Party is likely to be a key input.

"You have a divided Conservative parliamentary party which reflects divided Conservatives across the country -- city

Conservatives, business Conservatives versus rural, older Conservatives" said Robin Niblett, director of Chatham House think-tank in central London in a recent interview with Xinhua. This reflects both a divided country, closely balanced over leave or remain, and a history of division with the Conservative Party that has been a feature of its politics for over 40 years.

"I don't know what is going to happen, the next party conference will be very interesting. The risk in a nutshell is that the Brexit negotiations will again become a prisoner of Conservative Party politics," Niblett said.

Conservatives meet for their conference in Manchester in October, and a weakened prime minister faces a challenge to her power from Cabinet ministers who are strong Brexiters and others who voted for remain and wish to mitigate the possible negative impact of leaving.

## **PROBLEM FOR CONSERVATIVES**

The issue of the EU, or the European Economic Community (EEC) as it was known when the UK first joined it in 1973, has been an ever-present for the Conservatives.

In 1975 the UK had a referendum on EEC entry, and resoundingly voted yes. Traditional party lines of left and right, Labour and Conservative were split, but the leadership and many of the senior members of both parties were in favor of EEC membership.

This included Margaret Thatcher, who later became prime minister. She continued to support the UK in the EU but later turned against it. Her example inspired and gave support to

Eurosceptics and an anti-EU tone in British politics.

This led to the foundation of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) with the intention of getting the UK out of Europe.

"The British parliament is now divided over Brexit, the idea was to have a Conservative majority in parliament leading the country into a firm Brexit," Niblett told Xinhua in an exclusive interview.

"May would be leading Britain out of Europe. What you have now is a Conservative Party, the majority of whom voted for remain; remember there has not been a big turnover because they lost seats and did not gain them."

May has a minority in the new parliament and governs with the support of a small party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) from Northern Ireland. The potential for small numbers of MPs to cause trouble if they rebel is great and may prove irresistible.

On one side May faces a tight but small group of determined Eurosceptics. On the other side there are the majority of her MPs, who voted and supported remain.

"So, even though there are only 30 or 40 rebel MPs there are at least half the party in parliament who are sceptical about Brexit and although they accept that it will happen they do not want a silly Brexit. They think No Deal is the worst deal," said Niblett.

## **TRANSITION DEAL**

A year and two months after the Brexit vote it is only now that the Conservative Party has coalesced around a view on how

Brexit should be framed -- should it be a complete break or a partial break, a hard or a soft Brexit and should it be a sharp ending at the end of March 2019 or a longer, phased exit.

"Britain when it leaves the EU will have to leave the single market and the customs union because there is no way the UK will ever accept a situation where it is taking rules or having its trade policy determined by other governments," said Niblett.

"That might work for Iceland or some other small country, but Britain is Britain. This is about politics and identity. All this talk about hard and soft is meaningless.

"There is only one type of Brexit. You could talk about transition -- on transitions you can have hard soft and say we reject the authority of the European Court of Justice from the minute Britain leaves the EU but what is rationally happening is that the Cabinet is uniting around a view that there needs to be a two- or three-year period."

Negotiations will determine the details, said Niblett, but areas like farming or air traffic control could exit EU authority at different times.

But a crucial demand of the Brexiteres is that Brexit must happen, and Niblett said that for them their demands would be that any transition agreement would result in a full exit, not a halfway house.

"The transition is now accepted," he said. And in that transition it looks like the Cabinet, those who are leave campaigners and those who are remain, seems to have agreed over the summer that a transition will be necessary.

"The strong Brexit people seem to be saying as long as we are leaving and it is crystal clear and binding we have a withdrawal agreement in place by March 2019 we could wait three years for that to become crystal clear."

Niblett said their position was pragmatic; they did not want to be "blamed as the people undermining the British economy they want to be the people who prove that being out of the EU is success."

He added: "They want to give Brexit the best chance possible. I think a majority can live, with a period of continuing European Court of Justice (ECJ) law."

## **"SENSIBLE" BREXIT**

Cameron's gamble on a referendum backfired and cost him his job.

May's gamble on a general election to give her a firmer hand to negotiate and to lead her party also backfired. But she remains prime minister, and Brexit negotiations are set to continue with the aim of the UK having a deal in place by the deadline of the end of March 2019.

Although May's gamble means she lost ground, it does give an opportunity for a broader consensus around what Brexit should look like.

Niblett said: "you have a chance now for a more sensible Brexit; you will have to now have more parliamentary scrutiny of bills. May cannot just push things through saying either you are loyal to this country or you are not. She will have to negotiate as a

chairperson, become the mediator in chief and help Britain arrive at a sensible Brexit."

And tantalisingly the Brexit road is not only a complicated one, it is likely to be a long one. Niblett felt that there could be yet another referendum on whatever deal is reached.

"There is a certainly a possibility of a second referendum to approve the deal because I don't think parliament has the authority any more to approve the deal," he said.

## Spotlight: Turkey's bid for EU membership has no clear path forward

Source: Xinhua | 2017-09-07| Editor: Zhou Xin

ISTANBUL, Sept. 7 (Xinhua) -- As German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced she would propose to stop Turkey's accession talks at an upcoming EU summit, Turkish analysts are divided over whether the 28-nation bloc would end Turkey's membership negotiations, a prospect that would cost Ankara dearly economically.

Some feel that Merkel would not be able to convince all her EU partners to officially halt negotiations with Turkey.

"I don't think Merkel would be able to get all the 28 EU countries to accept her proposal," Can Baydarol, deputy chairman of the European Union and Global Research Association based in Ankara, told Xinhua.

Conceding that Germany is a heavy weight in the union, he

added "there are countries and political groups in the EU which do not hold with Merkel's attitude."

Criticizing Ankara for moving away from the rule of law, Merkel said last Sunday that Turkey should not become a full member of the EU.

The German leader called for a joint stance in the EU, as the bloc needs a consensus to officially stop the accession talks.

Ankara applied to join the EU in 1987 and started in 2005 the negotiations for full membership, which have already been stalled over the past couple of years.

Turkey's relations with the EU have turned for the worse particularly after a coup attempt jolted Turkey in July last year, following which the Turkish government imposed a state of emergency.

Brussels has frequently criticized Ankara over what it called crackdown on dissidents, growing authoritarianism and violations of the rule of law.

"Merkel may have her way at the EU summit considering that over 40 percent of the EU budget is provided by Germany," Faruk Sen, president of the Turkish European Foundation for Education and Scientific Studies (TAVAK), told Xinhua.

France and Denmark have offered support to Merkel's proposal, arguing Turkey is moving away from democracy.

French government spokesperson Christophe Castaner said it is impossible to expect boosted integration with Turkey given the political situation in the country, while Danish Prime Minister

Lars Lokke Rasmussen said it is meaningless to continue membership talks with Ankara as it is swiftly drifting away from European values.

Both countries also underlined that dialogue with Turkey should continue.

A statement by EU Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini suggested, however, that the EU may not fully agree with Merkel on the issue.

A day after Merkel's remarks, the EU's top diplomat said the union is continuing to be in dialogue with Turkey, a candidate country.

Accession talks have their own specific criteria, she added.

"Even if Germany presses hard, there will be many in the EU that will oppose a formal break with Turkey," Faruk Logoglu, a former senior diplomat of Turkey, told Xinhua.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also claimed on Wednesday that some EU countries had started to raise their voices against Merkel's call, saying Germany cannot determine EU policy as it requires a consensus by member states.

Despite Mogherini's remarks, Sen, who previously headed the Essen-based Turkish Research Center when he lived in Germany for years, feels that Berlin could manage at least to have the accession talk freeze.

It is widely argued that Merkel's discourse may well be aimed at getting more votes in the elections to be held in Germany on

Sept. 24.

Aversion to Turkey appears to have been on the rise among the German public as well as in some other EU countries as a result largely of the escalating war of words between leaderships.

The German chancellor's reference to the importance of ties with Ankara and the necessity to take a decision by consensus strongly suggests such an inference, Baydarol maintained.

"No European politician can resist the temptation of Turkey-bashing at the time of elections," stated Logoglu, "Turkish leaders with their equally vehement vilifications of Europeans provide ready fuel for this pointless tug-of-war."

The strain in Ankara-Berlin ties turned into a diplomatic crisis when Germany barred some Turkish cabinet ministers from addressing Turkish expats ahead of a referendum in Turkey in April on expanding the powers of the president.

Erdogan responded by accusing Berlin of adopting Nazism and fascism, which drew a harsh reaction from Germany.

Then in August, the Turkish leader called on Turks living in Germany to vote against Germany's leading parties, which he described as Turkey's enemies.

The remarks drew sharp criticism from German politicians, who saw them as an intervention in Germany's domestic politics, with Merkel calling them "absolutely unacceptable."

Back in July, the European Parliament voted in favor of a non-binding proposal calling on the EU countries to suspend membership talks with Turkey, should Ankara go ahead with

constitutional changes to make way for a presidential system as endorsed in the April referendum.

The amendments have been much criticized at home and abroad for leading to a one-man rule while damaging the separation of powers.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker warned in August that suspending the accession talks would be wrong, taking into consideration the EU's refugee deal with Ankara.

Turkey updated a refugee deal with the EU in March last year to prevent the flow of illegal immigration toward Europe in return for visa-free travel for its citizens, revival of its long-stalled accession talks and financial aid for refugees in Turkey.

The number of illegal migrants being smuggled into Europe via Turkey has fallen sharply as a result.

On Wednesday, Merkel seemed to further stiffen her stance on Turkey's membership talks.

Referring to some German citizens being detained in Turkey, she said there could be no question of continuing membership talks as Turkey is still violating the rule of law. Berlin said the arrest of some German citizens is politically motivated. For Turkey, deterioration in ties with the EU and Germany may well take its toll on the Turkish economy.

If things continue to get worse, it may cost Turkey up to around 20 billion euros in economic loss, said Sen.

Germany introduced in July economic and military sanctions

against Turkey, including steps that would hinder German investments in the country as well as measures that would partly block EU financial aid to Ankara and loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

Sen noted that loans Ankara is getting from the EIB have an interest rate as low as one percent on average.

The European bank provided a total of over 20 billion euros in loans to Turkey between 2007 and 2015.

If things do not get better, the EU may not allocate any money for Turkey as a candidate country in its budget for 2020-2026 either, warned Sen.

Many fear that Turkey's democracy would also be negatively affected by a breakup with the EU.

Aziz Konukman, a professor of economics at Ankara's Gazi University, believes that an official halt by the EU of membership negotiations could prove economically costly, as this scenario would create doubts about democracy in Turkey.

Not only investors from the EU, but those from around the world would be frightened away when there is no legal security in Turkey, he said, laying emphasis on the importance of democracy for economic growth.

It is argued that Turkey's link to the EU has been widely seen as its commitment to democracy, which has helped the country more easily attract direct foreign investments so far.

With a fast-growing population, low savings rate and huge

current accounts deficit, Turkey desperately needs foreign investments for growth.

The economic loss Turkey would suffer due to concerns about its democracy following a breakup with the EU would be incomparably higher than the loss in EU financial aid, Konukman stressed.

"If the EU anchor is lost, then it almost becomes impossible for Turkey to be rated investable by international ratings agencies," he said.

The EU is both Turkey's biggest export market and investor as far as foreign direct investments are concerned.

Turkey's tourism sector would suffer as well from the crisis, as Europeans make up a big majority of tourist arrivals in Turkey and their number has already fallen considerably in the past two years.

Despite Erdogan's challenging speeches, Logoglu feels that Ankara would not abandon its EU membership bid as a strategic goal. He is expecting reason to prevail at the end of the day as "a formal break would have ruinous consequences for both sides."

On Sept. 7-8, Turkey's EU Minister Omer Celik was scheduled to meet with foreign ministers of EU countries in Tallinn, Estonia.

"As far as real politics is concerned, both sides need each other," stressed Baydarol.

# Iran, Turkey getting closer after Kurdish referendum

2017-10-04 CGTN By Zhou Wenjia

Iran and Turkey are growing much closer together, according to Mostafa Khoshcheshm, a senior analyst and commentator based in Tehran. He told CGTN that it's a result of Iran and Turkey's policies to contain the Kurdistan government's independence bid, as well as the recent success within the framework of Astana talks over Syria.

This also gives rise to a new era of regional collaboration. According to Khoshcheshm, Iran and Turkey have long been good neighbors with increasing economic ties. However, during the last decade, they were pursuing different political agendas in their foreign policies, especially in the Middle East with regard to Syria and Iraq. Now with the Kurdish crisis and the Astana talks, he thinks the two countries can see more common benefits and interests.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has arrived in Iran's capital Tehran for key talks with senior officials. Erdogan is scheduled to meet Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to discuss boosting bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues.

His visit takes place against the backdrop of the recent controversial Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum. Thus, Turkey and Iran's responses to the Iraqi Kurdish vote is expected to top the agenda.

## **Military action 'unlikely'**

Tehran and Ankara issued thinly-veiled military threats to the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), following its independence referendum. However, Khoshcheshem believes it is not likely these threats will be translated into military action. Instead, he said the two countries will first try economic and political leverage to force Iraqi Kurdistan to think twice before taking any further action.

An economic siege could wreak havoc on the KRG and force it to stop its secession efforts. But Khoshcheshem also thinks that posing a credible military threat would always remain an option if other actions fail to convince the Kurdistan government.

Ankara has been trying to seek regional consensus on how to block efforts by the Kurdistan Regional Government to split from Iraq. According to Tulin Daloglu, a senior political analyst based in Ankara, it is likely Turkey has much more at stake on the meeting's outcome than Tehran, since Turkey has a more vibrant Kurdish population that is more politically well-organized than the Iranian Kurds.

Although Turkey's Kurds have not indicated they want an independent Kurdistan, Turkey is worried that once borders start changing in the region, it could have further consequences. Meanwhile, stability could be the rarest commodity in the region for the foreseeable future.

# Sides agree to Syrian peace push

China Daily | 2017-09-30

Putin and Erdogan in turnaround to reach new de-escalation deal

ANKARA - Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that the de-facto conditions needed to end Syria's civil war have been achieved.

Putin's comments, which followed talks with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara, come as Russia, Turkey and Iran cooperate on maintaining de-escalation zones in Syria.

Erdogan said they focused on the specifics of securing a de-escalation zone in Syria's northern province of Idlib on the border with Turkey, emphasizing the shared political will to contribute to the Syrian political settlement.

Putin, for his part, hailed "our friend, President Erdogan" for helping make the de-escalation deal possible, adding that it would allow fighting to halt and create conditions for the return of refugees to their homes.

"I consider these agreements our common, extremely important success," Putin said. "The necessary conditions have been created for putting an end to the fratricidal war in Syria, completely destroying terrorists and allowing Syrians to return to peaceful life."

Putin's visit came as Turkey and Russia are working to deepen ties in a turnaround for the two nations, which have backed opposing sides in Syria and nearly came to blows over Turkey's downing of a Russian plane in 2015.

Putin and Erdogan also talked about the Iraqi Kurdish referendum held on Monday, with the Turkish president denouncing it as a "big mistake" that eroded stability in the region.

Erdogan underlined the need to prevent "even more serious mistakes", adding that "it's important that the international community sides with Iraq's territorial integrity and political unity".

Turkey, which is battling a more than three-decades-old Kurdish insurgency, opposed the plebiscite, in which Iraqi Kurds voted overwhelmingly for independence. Turkey has said it is considering economic sanctions against the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq and has not ruled out military action.

Russia has maintained a neutral tone regarding the Kurdish referendum, but it underlined its support for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity while emphasizing the need to avoid destabilization of the region.

Reuters - AP - Xinhua

## Turkey inks deal to buy Russian S-400 missile systems

By Xinhua September 12, 2017

ANKARA – Turkey has signed a deal with Russia to buy S-400 missile defense systems in its first major weapons purchase from Moscow, the Hurriyet daily reported on Tuesday.

The purchase of the missile systems from a non-NATO supplier will raise concerns in the West over their compatibility with the alliance's equipment, the report said.

The deal for the surface-to-air missile defense batteries is

Ankara's most significant pact with a non-NATO supplier, it said.

"Signatures have been collected for the purchase of S-400s from Russia. A deposit has also been made as far as I know," Erdogan said in comments published in Hurriyet daily and other newspapers.

"Putin and I are determined on this issue," he told journalists.

Erdogan said Turkey was free to make military acquisitions based on its defense needs.

## **Saudi King signs trade deals during landmark visit to Moscow**

2017-10-06 By Julia Lyubova

Saudi Arabia's King Salman met Russian President Vladimir Putin, discussing the Syrian conflict, oil and military contracts. King Salman has become the first Saudi Arabian monarch to visit Russia on a trip being hailed as a historic landmark by both countries.

According to Russian officials, dozens of deals and contracts have been signed between Moscow and Riyadh during the King's visit. They included nuclear industry, space and military agreements, featuring the sale of Russian S-400 missile defense systems.

Despite their differences on Syria, the civil war was a major focus of the talks. The leaders said they are working together on uniting Syrian opposition.

"I want to mention that throughout our relations we share

common views on many regional and international issues," said King Salman on Thursday. "We're cooperating on all issues which help prosperity and strengthening of security of our countries and international peace and security."

Relations between the two countries have often been strained. In the Cold War era, the Saudis helped arm Afghan rebels against the Soviet Union. Today, Moscow and Riyadh back opposing sides in Syria's civil war. However, relations have been improving in recent years and Salman's son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has held several meetings with Vladimir Putin.

Analysts say King Salman's trip highlights Russia's growing power in the Middle East.

"Saudi Arabian King is trying to find not only a political supporter of what he's going to do in the future Syria after the defeat of ISIL. But also he's trying to look for a potential lucrative military market. And the US it seems to him is not a very stable partner under the presidency of Donald Trump," said Vladimir Sotnikov, a political analyst on Middle East and Central Asia.

Hit by the fall in oil prices since mid-2014, Russia and Saudi Arabia, along with other OPEC and non-OPEC countries, agreed in May to extend production cuts of around 1.8m barrels per day. Moscow and Riyadh pledged continued cooperation to stabilize the global oil market.

