

Headlines:

- German Parliament Votes in Favour of Partial Burqa Ban
- France, Germany want New Turkey Ties but Dodge EU Membership
- Pentagon Sending 5,700 New Troops to Afghanistan, Europe

Details:

German Parliament Votes in Favour of Partial Burqa Ban

The German parliament has supported a draft law banning women working in the civil service, judiciary and military from wearing full-face Islamic veils. Burqas and niqabs will be prohibited in selected professions as part of the legislation, which will not come into effect until being approved by the Bundesrat state parliament. Thomas de Maiziere, the German interior minister, argued that the ban was compatible with integration as debate continues over the arrival of more than a million asylum seekers in the country. "Integration also means that we should make clear and impart our values and where the boundaries of our tolerance towards other cultures lie," he said. "The draft law we have agreed on makes an important contribution to that." Some right-wing politicians have called for a full ban on the burqa in public, which has been imposed in France and Belgium, but Mr de Maiziere said the move would be incompatible with Germany's constitution. The new law will require government employees to show their faces, as well as giving authorities the power to check women's identities in elections. It was opposed by politicians from the left-wing Die Linke and Die Grünen parties, who dismissed the legislation as a "purely symbolic policy" pandering to the right-wing Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) ahead of September's elections. Critics argued that burqa-wearing soldiers and officials do not actually exist, making the new rules redundant, and said they will worsen tensions. Angela Merkel announced her support for the move in December, saying full-face veils were "not acceptable in Germany" and calling them to be banned "wherever it is legally possible". She is bidding for her fourth term as Chancellor, battling a rise in support for the anti-immigration AfD, which has blamed her decision to open Germany's borders to refugees in 2015 for a series of Isis-inspired terror attacks. [Source: The Independent]

Merkel is eager to be re-elected for a fourth-term and she is using the burqa ban to appear tough on Islam. By doing so, Merkel hopes to win votes away from the far right parties. Politicians across Europe have used Islam to further their agenda even if it undermines Western Liberalism.

France, Germany want New Turkey Ties but Dodge EU Membership

France and Germany sought a new deal with Turkey on Friday to repair relations with President Tayyip Erdogan but would not say whether the Turkish leader's new powers and his crackdown on opponents had ended the country's EU ambitions. Worried by what the European Union sees as Erdogan's growing authoritarianism, EU lawmakers called this week for a formal suspension of Turkey's long-stalled EU bid, saying it does not meet democratic

standards. German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, who held talks in Malta with his EU counterparts and with Turkey's top diplomat Mevlut Cavusoglu, said he was "strictly against" annulling Turkey's decade-long bid for EU membership. But after a day of talks, he said the real issue was to ensure the bloc had a new, looser agreement to offer Turkey before ditching the EU accession process. Since its launch in 2005, the entry process has helped Turkey win foreign investment and become the world's 15th largest economy, EU officials say. But talks have since stalled. "It does not improve things by cancelling something before we have something new to offer," Gabriel told reporters. "We can try to open new channels for negotiations," he said, referring to an idea to broaden the European Union's trade ties with Turkey, giving Turkish companies greater tariff-free access to the bloc's 500 million citizens. That could soften any political blow from a formal suspension of accession talks, EU officials said. Austria has led calls to abort the process, which has been frozen by political obstacles over Cyprus and resistance in some EU states to let in the majority Muslim country, even before this month's referendum. "It would be absolutely wrong to stick to the illusion of accession (to the EU)," Austria's Sebastian Kurz said. Ending Turkey's five-decade-old dream of joining the European Union is sensitive because the West worries about isolating an important NATO ally that straddles Europe and Asia. [Source: Reuters]

The European Union is Turkey's biggest foreign investor and biggest trading partner, while Turkey shares a border with Iraq, Syria and with Russia in the Black Sea. Europe's uncertain future is prompting the EU to take a softer stance on Turkey. However, Turkey should unequivocally abandon its attempts to join a union that is struggling to survive and is likely to implode in the coming years. This new reality provides Turkey with the ideal opportunity to shape the face of Europe, but current Republic format of ruling is ill equipped to exploit such a situation. Unless, Turkey return to the model of Khilafah Rashidah it will struggle to keep the West manipulating its internal situation for their own benefit.

Pentagon Sending 5,700 New Troops to Afghanistan, Europe

The Pentagon announced Thursday it would send about 5,700 soldiers later this year to Afghanistan and Europe on regular troop rotations, Stars and Stripes reported. About 1,700 soldiers from Fort Stewart in Georgia and Fort Bragg in North Carolina will head to Afghanistan in the summer to replace troops there; another 4,000 from a Fort Riley, Kansas, brigade will deploy to Europe in the fall, according to the military news outlet. A Pentagon spokesman, Eric Pahon, said the new deployment will not increase the size of U.S. forces in either location, Stars and Stripes reported. Two months ago, Army Gen. John Nicholson, the top American commander in Afghanistan, asked for "a few thousand" additional troops to boost the NATO-led training and advising of Afghan security forces – saying the war against the Taliban was at a stalemate. [Source: NewsMax.com]

So much for Trump's isolationist credentials. The US military footprint under Trump is expanding and not contracting as so many Americans had hoped for. America's war in Afghanistan that never seems to end is drawing more US soldiers as resistance from the Pushtuns increases. After 100 days in office, Pentagon has high jacked Trump's foreign policy agenda.