

# France, Germany Meet to Oil Rusty EU Motor



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron are on their way for a private dinner at the “Kochzimmer” restaurant in Potsdam outside Berlin, June 6, 2023.

BERLIN (Reuters) -- France and Germany’s governments kicked off an unprecedented two-day retreat in Hamburg on Monday in a bid to reset relations between the European Union’s two biggest powers amid a host of disagreements on energy, industry and defense policy.

The French-German motor that has driven EU policy for decades has proven rusty of late although it is more necessary than ever given the multitude of crises the bloc faces, say analysts and lawmakers.

Europe is grappling with surging irregular migration, the transition

to a carbon neutral economy, the Ukraine war, a shift in the relationship with top trade partner China and now also conflict in the Middle East.

“The Franco-German relationship, and as a result Europe, is not living up to the challenges we are currently facing,” said Jacob Ross at the German Council on Foreign Relations.

One of the problems is that French President Emmanuel Macron sees himself as the natural successor to former Chancellor Angela Merkel as leader of Europe, and has adopted strong stances in Brussels, some contrary to German interests, he said.

On the German side, the Ukraine war has led Berlin to focus more on its transatlantic alliance with its top security partner, the United States - possibly at the cost of its relationship with France.

A lack of chemistry between Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has also made it more difficult also for both governments to hammer out their differences, say lawmakers and diplomats.

“Macron and Scholz are simply very different personalities,” Anton Hofreiter, chair of the German parliament’s Committee on European Union Affairs and member of the Greens.

The two countries’ current major point of contention is EU electricity reform, with Germany and some other EU states pushing for stricter rules on state-backed support of power prices that would hurt French industry.

The two-day retreat in the northern port city of Hamburg, where Scholz was mayor from 2011 to 2018, aims to put the relationship on a new footing rather than to yield concrete policy initiatives.

“If both decide to just pursue their own interests, then not only will both lose out but so will the EU, which is not as strong and stable as it should be,” Detlef Seif, a leading German Christian Democratic Union lawmaker on EU affairs, said.

## U.S. Think Tank Claims North Korea’s Arms Supply to Russia



A picture issued by the Korean Central news agency shows North Korean rocket launcher vehicles at a military parade in Pyongyang on April 25, 2023.

SEOUL, South Korea (Dispatches) -- Recent satellite photos show a sharp increase in rail traffic along the North Korea-Russia border, indicating the North is supplying munitions to Russia, according to a U.S. think tank.

Speculation about a possible North Korean plan to refill Russia’s munition stores drained in its protracted war with Ukraine flared last month, when North Korean leader Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia to meet President Vladimir Putin and visit key military sites. Foreign officials suspect Kim is seeking sophisticated Russian weapons technologies in return for the munitions to boost his nuclear program.

“Given that Kim and Putin discussed some military exchange-

es and cooperation at their recent summit, the dramatic increase in rail traffic likely indicates North Korea’s supply of arms and munitions to Russia,” Beyond Parallel, a website run by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank, said in a report.

“However, the extensive use of tarps to cover the shipping crates/containers and equipment makes it impossible to conclusively identify what is seen at the Tumannang Rail Facility” on the border, it said.

The report said satellite images as of Oct. 5 captured “a dramatic and unprecedented level of freight railcar traffic” at the Tumannang Rail Facility. It said images show approximately 73 railcars while a review of previous satellite imag-

es over the past five years shows about 20 railcars at this facility at most.

U.S. and South Korean officials have warned that North Korea and Russia would face consequences if they went ahead with the reported weapons transfer deal in violation with UN Security Council resolutions that ban all weapons trade involving North Korea.

Denmark said Monday it is working to “expand and deepen” a coalition of countries committed to deliver F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

The Netherlands and Denmark have led a push to train Ukrainian pilots to fly F-16s and to later deliver fighter jets to Ukraine to help counter Russia’s air superiority.

Norway at the end of August also committed to delivering F-16s to Ukraine, while 11 other nations, including the United States, have said they would help train Ukrainian pilots to fly the jets.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told the NATO parliamentary assembly’s annual session in Copenhagen that NATO and the EU must better coordinate their procurement of weapons and ammunition within the union and the military alliance.

Western taxpayers are starting to ask questions about how their money is being spent in helping Ukraine’s armed forces, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday.

## UK Government Pushes Court on Deporting Migrants

LONDON (Reuters) -- Government lawyers told Britain’s top court on Monday there was a serious and pressing need for its plan to deport migrants to Rwanda, one of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s key policies, as they sought to overturn a ruling which declared it unlawful.

In June, London’s Court of Appeal concluded that the scheme to send tens of thousands of migrants more than 4,000 miles (6,400 km) to East Africa was not lawful, saying Rwanda could not be treated as a safe third country.

The court ruled that those sent to Rwanda would be at risk of being sent home where they could face persecution despite having a legitimate asylum claim. This would make the policy unlawful under Britain’s Human Rights Act (HRA), which made the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) part of British law.

The decision dealt a massive blow to Sunak’s pledge to stop thousands of migrants from arriving in small boats on the English south coast.

Lawyers representing eight of the asylum seekers involved in the case said in court documents there were “critical defects” in Rwanda’s system for determining the status of ref-

ugees, also referencing the Rwandan government’s “capture of the judiciary” and the repression of political dissent.

Legal teams representing the migrants also want the judges to conclude the scheme itself is unlawful on a wider basis.

The political stakes are high and the outcome, with a final ruling likely by year-end, could have far-reaching consequences.

Sunak, whose Conservatives are trailing by about 20 points in opinion polls ahead of an election expected next year, has made a vow to “stop the boats” one of his five priorities as he seeks to turn around his party’s fortunes.

Surveys show that immigration, a key factor in the 2016 referendum vote for Britain to leave the European Union, remains a major concern for voters, and that a majority of the public think the government is handling the issue badly.

The government’s first planned Rwanda deportation flight had been due to leave in June last year, but was blocked at the last minute by an injunction from the European Court of Human Rights until all the UK legal action had been concluded.

## Xi: China-U.S. Ties to Impact ‘Destiny of Mankind’



Journalists film Chinese President Xi Jinping, second right, and U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, third left, at a bilateral meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Oct. 9, 2023.

BEIJING (AFP) -- Chinese President Xi Jinping said Monday that China-U.S. ties would impact the “destiny of mankind”, as he met with a group of American senators in Beijing.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is the latest high-level American official to go to China as Washington says it seeks to ease tensions with Beijing, leading a six-person delegation.

“How China and the United States get along with each other in the face of a world of change and turmoil will determine the future and destiny of mankind,” Xi said as he met with Schumer at Beijing’s Great Hall of People.

“I have said many times, including to several presidents, that we have 1,000 reasons to improve China-U.S. relations, but not one reason to ruin them,” Xi said, adding China-U.S. ties are “the most important bilateral relationship in the world”.

Earlier China’s top diplomat Wang Yi said he hoped Washington and Beijing could manage their differences “more rationally”.

Meeting with Schumer at Beijing’s Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, Foreign Minister Wang told the senate delegation he hoped their visit would help the two sides “manage existing differences more rationally, helping the relationship between the two countries return to the track of healthy development”.

Wang also said he hoped they would “more accurately understand China” after the trip, which he said comes as the world is in a “turbulent period of change”.

“The crisis in Ukraine has not yet subsided, and warfare has reemerged in the Middle East,” he said.

“All these various challenges need to be addressed by the international community, and China and the United States should play their due roles,” Wang said.

Schumer also Monday met with Zhao Leji, the head of the standing committee of China’s rubber-stamp National People’s Congress.

“Our countries together will shape this century,” Schumer told Zhao.

“As the two great powers it is natural we find ourselves in competition in areas like trade, technology, diplomacy, and more,” he said.

“We welcome this competition,” Schumer stressed. “We do not seek conflict.”

Schumer is the latest high-level U.S. official to visit China as Washington seeks to ease tensions with Beijing, which have flared in recent years over everything from trade to human rights.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Treasury and Commerce Secretaries Janet Yellen and Gina Raimondo, as well as climate envoy John Kerry, have all visited China this year.

## Ruling Coalition Dealt a Blow in German Elections



The CDU’s Boris Rhein celebrates at an election party in Wiesbaden on Sunday.

BERLIN (Reuters) -- Voters dealt the parties of Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s fractious centre-left coalition a sharp rebuke in the key states of Bavaria and Hesse on Sunday, with economic woes and migration fears boosting the opposition conservatives and the far right.

The elections saw the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party burst out of its post-industrial eastern strongholds to score its best-ever result in a western state, in Hesse, and come in second place in both states.

All three parties in Scholz’s federal coalition - his Social Democrats, the Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) - did worse than five years ago in the states that together account for around a quarter of the German population.

The FDP looked on track to fail to reach the 5% threshold to enter parliament in Bavaria, and possibly Hesse too.

Analysts said this would further stoke tensions in a coalition that has struggled to find common ground, with Scholz accused of failing to show the leadership needed to impose order and tackle crises, from the war in Ukraine to the green transition.

“If necessary the FDP needs to be

ready to leave” the coalition, Thomas Kemmerich, head of the FDP in the eastern state of Thuringen that is to hold its own election next year, was quoted as saying by German media outlet The Pioneer. “This cannot be a taboo.”

Jens Spahn, a senior legislator for the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU), said that rarely had a government been given such a comprehensive slapdown.

“And rarely has it been so clear: whether on migration, the economy or climate policy, people want a different politics,” Spahn said.

In Hesse, home to the glittering towers of financial capital Frankfurt, the CDU were forecast to get 34.6% of the vote for the state legislature, likely allowing them to govern for another term, projections for ARD state broadcaster at around 2200 CET showed.

The SPD’s 15.1% - down 4.7% on its 2018 results - was a personal blow to Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, whose campaign to head the state was dogged by criticism of her handling of a surge in irregular migration.

The failure of the far-left Left party to reach the 5% threshold necessary to remain in the state parliament in Hesse added to the broader shift to the right.

## News in Brief

COPENHAGEN (Reuters) -- Denmark is working to “expand and deepen” a coalition of countries committed to deliver F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told the NATO parliamentary assembly’s annual session in Copenhagen on Monday. The Netherlands and Denmark have led a push to train Ukrainian pilots to fly F-16s and to later deliver fighter jets to Ukraine to help counter Russia’s air superiority. Norway at the end of August also committed to delivering F-16s to Ukraine, while 11 other nations, including the United States, have said they would help train Ukrainian pilots to fly the jets. The Danish prime minister also said on Monday that NATO and the EU must better coordinate their procurement of weapons and ammunition within the union and the military alliance.

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YAOUNDE (Reuters) -- A wave of water released by a burst dam has killed at least 23 people in Cameroon’s capital Yaounde following heavy rains, the army’s rescue unit said on Monday. A colonial-era dam gave way at around 16:00 p.m. (1500 GMT) local time on Sunday, releasing water from a small lake, said Assola Joseph, a local leader in the Mbakolo neighborhood. Residents and rescue workers were picking through the debris of rubble, broken timber, uprooted banana trees and corrugated sheeting on a steep hillside on Monday morning. A Reuters journalist at the scene said at least five bodies had been recovered, and at least 30 houses destroyed.

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NEW DELHI (Reuters) -- Five Indian states will elect new legislatures next month, independent election panel said on Monday, beginning a process of regional polls ahead of national elections due next year. The elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram are expected to give an indication of voter mood, especially in the heartland states which are key to the fortunes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Voters are unhappy with high inflation, unemployment and an uneven economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and a new alliance of 28 opposition parties called INDIA has been formed to jointly challenge BJP nationally. Modi and BJP remain popular after nearly a decade in power nationally and surveys suggest he is expected to win a third term in general elections due by May 2024. Congress, India’s main opposition party which leads the INDIA alliance, is in power in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. BJP rules the central state of Madhya Pradesh and its ally is in power in the small northeastern state of Mizoram.

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WAD MADANI, Sudan (AFP) -- At least three civilians were killed on Monday in Sudan when shells struck a key hospital in the capital, a medical source said, as fighting between rival generals continued unabated. “Shells fell on the Al-Nau hospital,” in Omdurman, the twin city of Sudan’s capital Khartoum, a medical source told AFP by telephone. Omdurman has been the site of fierce battles between the regular army led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo who have been at war since April. Rights groups have accused both sides of targeting health facilities since the conflict began on April 15.

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GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador (AFP) -- Ecuador extended by a month a state of emergency in place since the August assassination of presidential candidate and anti-graft crusader Fernando Villavicencio, the presidency announced. The extension comes shortly after seven Colombians arrested over Villavicencio’s killing were found dead in prison. Six of the suspects were killed Friday in the Guayas 1 prison in the port city of Guayaquil, while a seventh was found dead Saturday in a prison in the capital Quito. The assassination of Villavicencio, a centrist who had been polling in second place, rocked Ecuador days ahead of the August 20 national elections in which corruption and the country’s declining security situation were major themes.

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MONROVIA (AFP) -- Violence marred the close of Liberian President George Weah’s re-election campaign on Sunday, with scuffles between his supporters and members of the opposition breaking out during a parade in capital Monrovia, an AFP journalist saw. No official toll was available on Sunday evening, but AFP counted at least five men with injuries, some with large gashes on their heads. Supporters of former football star Weah’s political group, the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC), and members from the opposition ALGOP, threw stones at each other, and in response, police fired tear gas. The main political parties have pledged peaceful polls, but the deaths of three people in clashes last month between rival political camps have fuelled fears of electoral violence in the country, which suffered back-to-back civil wars between 1989 and 2003 that left more than 250,000 people dead.