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Brexit, Trump's Victory: All Not Quiet on the Western Front

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The Donald Trump's election in the US is not an isolated event but rather a big step in a new direction - a change to sweep away what is known as political establishment in the countries of the Western world. The president-elect rode into power on an anti-establishment wave that started with Brexit. Gaining momentum, this wave has a long way to go threatening the very existence of the West we know it today. It is eroding the Western liberal consensus embodied in the EU and its much vaunted values. The very foundation the West stands on is shaken.

The similarity is obvious: mistrusting those who are holding the reins of power today. The consequences for Europe's political landscape are potentially huge. With political taboos thrown aside during the Trump's campaign, the influence on the Europe's political culture is inevitable. As Gerard Araud, French Ambassador to Washington, tweeted in his comments on the results of US presidential race, «*After Brexit and this election, everything is now possible. A world is collapsing before our eyes. Dizziness*».

There may be great changes in the coming months to make the old West fade away and something new to emerge instead. The Brexit-started domino effect is continuing the chain reaction across the Western world. France and Austria could elect far right presidents in

upcoming elections. In Germany, Italy and the Netherlands and other countries right wing, anti-immigration parties are expected to make big gains.

The first European election after the Trump's victory takes place in Austria on December 4. Norbert Hofer, the candidate of the right wing, anti-establishment and anti-EU Freedom Party, has a good chance to win and reform the country.

Italian PM Matteo Renzi is predicted to lose a constitutional referendum on the same date as the support for the anti-European Five Star Movement, or M5S, led by Beppe Grillo, is growing. Grillo has hailed the Trump's victory. Italy's government has pegged its survival to the passage of the key referendum and will have to go if it loses the vote. Voters are to be asked whether they want changes to the appointment and powers of the national parliament as well as the partition of powers of state, regions, and administrative entities.

According to the polls, in the Netherlands far-right Geert Wilders is running neck in neck with the governing centre-right leader Mark Rutte. The March election will be a vote on Dutch membership of the EU.

According to Marine Le Pen, the French National Front leader who calls for leaving the EU and improving the relations with Russia, the shock US election result had *«made possible what had previously been presented as impossible»*. Her party won the European elections in 2014. According to the polls, she will be one of the final two candidates in the French presidential elections in May 2017. Her victory would be the third act of a *«global revolution»* after Brexit and the success Mr. Trump. According to the *Financial Times*, *«The probability of Marine Le Pen's election has increased with Brexit and now Trump's election because they are giving more credibility to the radical, populist vote»*.

In Germany the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany party is poised to make substantial gains in next September's elections.

The Czech Republic will hold elections in October 2017. ANO, a protest movement headed by Andrej Babis, a billionaire businessman and finance minister, is making strides toward victory with the pro-European Social Democratic Party led by PM Bohuslav Sobotka almost 15 percentage points behind.

Victor Orban, Hungarian anti-establishment, anti-EU Prime Minister, has good chances to win the elections in October, 2018 as the ruling Fidesz party's approval rating is rising.

Nationalists have taken power this year in Balkan countries such as Croatia and Bosnia. In Bulgaria, Socialist ally Rumex Radev, a Russia-friendly anti-immigration newcomer to politics, has just won the presidential election.

Nigel Farage, the longtime leader of the anti-immigration, pro-Brexit UK Independence Party, has pledged to help replicate the electoral success of Brexit and Trump across the West. «*Please don't for a minute think that the change ends here*», Mr. Farage wrote in the Sun tabloid. He believes that «*Voters across the Western world want nation state democracy, proper border controls and to be in charge of their own lives. Further political shocks in Europe and beyond are coming*».

The coming changes will take place against the background of the EU's unity doubted and threatened. France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus and Malta discuss the possibility of setting up an «Alliance of Europe's South» inside the EU to define its own agenda. It's not the problem of immigrants only. These nations tend to have similar views when it comes to financial and economic matters. They also oppose the idea of the EU as a transfer union in which wealthy countries in the north subsidize those in the south.

The idea of «mini-Schengen», including only the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Austria, is also floated inside the EU.

The problem of immigration has reinvigorated the activities of Visegrad Group - a bloc inside the EU, including Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (the V4). The V4 openly opposes the EU immigration policy among many other things imposed by the EU leadership. The combined GDP of the V4 makes it the world's 15th largest economy, and the number of its representatives in the European Parliament is twice as large as the number of representatives of France, Italy and the UK (still a member).

The appearance of alliances within the EU is on the way against the background of deep divergences on the anti-Russia sanctions and the need to form a European Army. The EU is at the crossroads of history. «*The purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned*», EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini wrote in the foreword to the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy the EU document published this summer.

With so many problems on the agenda, the EU can hardly speak with one voice on major international problems, including the relationship with Russia. Its very existence is questioned and this is the wrong time for aggravating security and economic problems. No new political forces emerging on the Europe's horizon support the anti-Russia policy and sanctions. The anti-Moscow stance of Brussels is out of time and out of place. It is doomed to become a thing of the past. The EU, as well as the West in general, is going through drastic changes. Probably, it will never be the same as we know it today. Brexit and the victory of Mr. Trump are the dawn of a new age.