France, Germany strengthen treaty ties to tackle EU crisis

The treaty pledges stronger political, economic and defense ties

FRANCE: French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel exchange the Franco-German friendship treaty during the signing ceremony. — AFP

President Emmanuel Macron and Chancellor Angela Merkel are meeting in late January 2019 to sign a new friendship treaty, drawing fire from the far right which fears it will erode sovereignty. (AP Photo/Francois Mori)

The treaty pledges stronger political, economic and defense ties

France and Germany’s governments on January 23, 2019 signed a new Franco-German friendship treaty designed to strengthen their shared European project, in a move that drew fire from the far-right. Leaders from across the European Union and beyond attended the ceremony.

According to a draft of the treaty as seen by the AP, this “new Franco-German friendship treaty shall serve as an instrument to take up and advance the policies and initiatives of the countries, that are in line with the values and strategic policies of the European Union and the European project, as well as in line with the objectives of the European Union and the European project,” in the words of the draft.

France, Germany and other countries have been engaging in a hamster race over the prospect of a new Franco-German friendship treaty since Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron announced plans for one in September 2018.

The treaty was signed in an atmosphere of anticipation, with many expecting it to serve as a key element in the two leaders’ broader vision of a more integrated Europe.

The treaty also appeared to be a significant diplomatic victory for Macron, whose efforts to build a broad-based European super-state have faced skepticism and criticism from many of his fellow leaders.

The treaty was supposed to be an important signpost on the road to a real European Union, but many saw it as nothing more than a “pawns” in diplomatic games. — AFP

Italy takes flight to new generation in Mafia sting

ROME: Anti-mafia police said yesterday they have arrested 17 men in a fourteen-island impasse that includes the island of Capraia, off the coast of Tuscany, a key base for Cosa Nostra, arresting seven suspected ring-star members of the so-called Cupola, a group turned lifetime sentences.

A joint operation, “Powerful public opinion” by Sicilian and Calabrian police, has arrested at least 17 of the 18 alleged members of the Cupola. — AFP

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Japan should stop referring to the islands as its “Northern Territories.” In a joint statement issued in Davos yesterday, the two countries’ foreign ministers said the two sides have “worked a lot... on the issues of their efforts to build cooperation and confidence.”

The Soviet army seized the four Kuril islands, between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan, from the Japanese in 1945. The treaty signing in Aachen yesterday was seen as part of a broader push for a rapprochement between Russia and Europe.

The treaty is the latest in a series of agreements between Russia and Europe in recent years, including a treaty signed in 1991 that established a “Franco-Russian Union.”

But the treaty has been criticized by some as being more of a publicity stunt than a serious commitment to cooperation.

The treaty is also seen as a symbol of the changing dynamics in the region, as the EU seeks to strengthen its relationship with Russia.

Italy’s Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, who has been a vocal critic of the deal, said the treaty was “full of good intentions, but lags far behind what is necessary.” — Reuters

Merkel is on her last lap as the leader of Europe’s most powerful country. In Aachen, she was greeted by boos and calls of “Macron, resign” from dozens of protesters who had gathered near the Japanese embassy in Germany. — Associated Press

Aachen: France and Germany yesterday signed a new friendship treaty to deepen their alliance at a time of crises for the EU, drawing fire from the far-right which fears it will erode sovereignty. Angela Merkel took the aisle to address the delegates as the French President and other leaders arrived at the historic site.

The treaty appeared to please neither side, meaning more likely protect us, and what allow us really to take back control of our friendship between France and Germany, our common policy, our friendship and our identity transcending party loyalty,” she said, “Like never before, within a month (of the treaty’s signing) there will be a decision by the two countries to break their agreement to for peace talks, recent statements from both capitals have called the agreement a sham.”

The treaty was signed at the Chateau de Versailles yesterday in the presence of about 500 guests, including French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other European leaders.

The treaty is expected to strengthen the “Franco-Russian Union” and is seen as a symbol of the changing dynamics in the region, as the EU seeks to strengthen its relationship with Russia.

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