

# European leaders are fighting to protect their union against US efforts to divide them

By: Dr. Abdullah Robin

Europe had for centuries been the theatre of bloody combat that reached unprecedented levels of destruction during two world wars in the last century. The establishment of the European Union and the single European currency made its 28 member countries economically strong and distanced them from the fear of war amongst themselves, while the US made them secure against Russia. Now, US President Donald Trump's aggressive administration makes Europe fear for its future.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, the EU foreign minister, Federica Mogherini, began meeting with Trump and his advisers and asked the United States not to "interfere with European politics." She complained that the US is "saying the European Union is not necessarily a good idea. Inviting us to dismantle what we have managed to build and which has brought us not only peace, but also economic strength." Mogherini emphasized that the US should respect the EU, and described European relations with the US in a new way: "We believe we are probably entering a time of a more pragmatic and transactional kind of relationship with the United States." This is no longer the language of friends and allies with shared values and interests, but that of business partners or competitors only.

The president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, went even further in a letter to the 27 EU heads of state before the Malta summit, where he listed the US alongside Russia and China as a threat to Europe: "An increasingly, let us call it, assertive China, especially on the seas, Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine and its neighbours, wars, terror and anarchy in the Middle East and in Africa, with radical Islam playing a major role, as well as worrying declarations by the new American administration all make our future highly unpredictable. For the first time in our history, in an increasingly multipolar external world, so many are becoming openly anti-European, or Eurosceptic at best. Particularly the change in Washington puts the European Union in a difficult situation; with the new administration seeming to put into question the last 70 years of American foreign policy."

The US has thrown away all pretense of friendship toward the European Union. There are indications that the US is considering to nominate Ted Malloch to be their ambassador to the EU. Malloch has said previously that "President Trump believes that dealing bilaterally with different European countries is in US interests, that we could have a stronger relationship with the countries individually." When the *BBC* asked why he wanted to be the ambassador, he replied: "I had in a previous career a diplomatic post where I helped bring down the Soviet Union. So maybe there's another union that needs a little taming."

Two members of the European Parliament, Manfred Weber and Guy Verhofstadt, responded in an angry letter: "Malloch, the likely nominee by US President Trump to become the new US ambassador to the European Union, made a series of public statements denigrating the EU. In these statements, the prospective nominee expressed his ambition to 'tame the bloc like he brought down the Soviet Union', eloquently supported dissolution of the European Union and explicitly bet on the demise of the common currency within months. These statements reveal outrageous malevolence regarding the values that define this European Union and ... have the potential to undermine seriously the transatlantic relationship that has, for the past 70 years, essentially contributed to peace, stability and prosperity on our continent."

With Britain leaving the European Union, Germany and France are fighting to keep the European Union together in the face of US attempts to divide them, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel said: "We Europeans have our fate in our own hands."

Jean-Pierre Raffarin, a former French Prime Minister, warned that, "Mr Trump and Mr Putin are likely to try to draw the map of Europe to their design" and, "the difficulty with Mr Trump is that he is completely unpredictable, we have to see what he is going to do ... The US wants to do bilateral deals with its friends. We don't accept this approach, we are united in the European Union and we must stay together". French President François Hollande also warned: "We must have a European conception of our future. If not, there will be – in my opinion – no Europe and not necessarily any way for each of the countries to be able to exert an influence in the world."