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By: TA | AP Insight

G7 at a crossroads after the US midterms



Foreign ministers from the Group of Seven industrialized democracies began two days of talks in Paris on Monday with clear differences on multiple unresolved global crises and questions about how U.S. President Donald Trump will approach foreign policy after his Republican Party's heavy losses in the midterm elections.

Whether on the Russia-Ukraine war, Iran or international organizations, the sides appeared far apart, although all agreed on the need to end the conflicts as quickly as possible.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio was expected to face questions about whether the administration will shift its positions on Russia-Ukraine, the Iran conflict, energy security and artificial intelligence.

The issues dominated discussions among top diplomats from the U.S., Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan on Monday and will most likely do so again Tuesday.

The Paris meeting is Rubio's first overseas trip since last week's midterm elections that dealt Republicans severe losses and cost them control of Congress, partly because of deeply unpopular policies such as the Iran war.

The talks also come as major protests unfold across Europe, including in the French capital.

US politics are likely to surface at allies' meeting

Asked about allies wanting to know what comes next after the elections, Rubio told reporters that the countries he is meeting with this week understand American politics and "they, too, have experienced divisions in government and divisions in their own system."

Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand, whose country has faced withering criticism and insults from Trump, said it remains an open question as to how Washington will proceed.

> The House and the Senate have changed leadership so it's very much a question of what the approach will be - Anita Anand

"In terms of the U.S. and its approach I will say that the president has executive powers," she told reporters in Paris. "The House and the Senate have changed leadership so it's very much a question of what the approach will be."

Yet there has been little sign that the Democrats' gains will affect Trump's strategy, and his first major personnel decision has been to install Stephen Miller, a hard-line supporter who has advocated extreme positions on both domestic and foreign policy, as chief of staff.

America's top diplomat, Rubio, is seen by many as presenting a gentler side to Trump's often brusque approach to both friends and foes, but there has been speculation — that he has denied — that he might choose to leave the administration early to prepare for a 2028 presidential run.

Wars in Iran and Ukraine will be major topics

Trump has floated the idea of a partnership with Europe to bring Russia's war in Ukraine to an end.

The president's envoys, Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner, are set to meet both Ukrainian and Russian officials in the United Arab Emirates starting Tuesday to discuss potential compromises.

Rubio said postwar security guarantees for Ukraine and the rest of Europe have been a top concern for allies.

"There's been some advances made in what that architecture could look like post-conflict," Rubio said. "Nothing's been finalized yet, and maybe some progress can be made in Abu Dhabi."

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul, who met separately with Rubio on Monday, said he welcomed the Abu Dhabi talks but stressed that Europe must be part of any resolution.

"I am still very grateful to the United States of America for making every effort to get the parties to the conflict to the table," Wadephul said. "But I made clear again here that Europe belongs at this table. There can be no solution without Europe, only with Europe."



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Anand also said the Abu Dhabi discussions could yield results.

"I want to underline the importance of the talks," she said. "It has been some months since the parties have met ... and I would like to underscore the importance of this discussion in Abu Dhabi," she said, adding that it would be critical to get "specific aspects" of a peace proposal clarified.

At the same time, Qatari and other mediators have proposed an interim solution to end the deadlock over the conflict with Iran that has sent fuel prices soaring amid instability in key shipping lanes in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea.

Rubio said the sides are not on "the verge of a breakthrough," while reiterating that Trump prefers a diplomatic solution.

But he noted of diplomacy that "right now, it hasn't been very productive because the Iranian demands are simply not just unacceptable but, in some cases, outrageous and ridiculous and really not realistic."

He said he expects allies to have a lot of questions about the conflict and next steps.

There's uncertainty about a consensus, even among allies

France has invited Brazil, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine to participate in some discussions. Its other priorities include Africa, China, Cuba and Haiti.

The French foreign ministry said there will be a meeting on artificial intelligence and a separate session on support for Ukraine.

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After the first meetings on Monday, Rubio posted on X that he had "emphasized the need for UN agencies to eliminate wasteful bureaucracy and make humanitarian aid more efficient. Our assistance must remain temporary, targeted, and accountable."

The comment signaled the administration would maintain its demands for reform at the United Nations. It has already withdrawn from several U.N. and other multilateral bodies.

Trump and his administration have unsettled America's G7 partners over issues including support for Ukraine and NATO and opposition to the International Criminal Court.

All G7 members except Japan, which has a separate treaty alliance with the U.S., belong to NATO.

The administration is pushing to dismantle the ICC, an international war crimes court to which all G7 members except the U.S. belong.

It has imposed severe sanctions on the court and several of its employees, saying the ICC is trying to investigate Americans.

In a meeting with French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, Rubio said he had raised “U.S. fundamental concerns about the International Criminal Court."

The Trump administration is particularly worried about the European Union invoking a statute that would immunize European governments, companies and individuals from secondary U.S. sanctions targeting those who support the ICC. U.S. officials have said the administration would respond if the “blocking statute” is implemented.