

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker gives a press conference in Brussels on March 4.



Europe Rethinks Its Military After Ukraine Confrontation

Richard Palmer | March 13

ACROSS EUROPE, NATIONS ARE REEVALUATING THEIR MILITARY policies in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In some countries the assessments are major, others minor, but there's no mistaking the activity sweeping across Europe.

The trend was most clearly demonstrated by European Union Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, who called for the EU to create an army. He told German newspaper *Die Welt* that "a common European army would convey a clear message to Russia that we are serious about defending our European values."

His statements received broad support, especially in Germany. Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said that "a European army is the future," and Chancellor Angela Merkel called for "deeper military cooperation in Europe."

But talk is cheap. Juncker has made comments like these before, [as has von der Leyen](#) and other German officials. Juncker

has almost no power to make these wishes a reality and Germany has, for now, left the European army-project in the "too hard" tray. Instead, Germany is trying to build it gradually by [integrating its military with its neighbors' militaries](#) one nation at a time.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has given this more gradual, but more concrete, cooperation a boost.

Finland and Sweden committed to a new military relationship that falls only slightly short of a formal mutual defense commitment, in a joint report published February 17. This is in addition to a commitment to set up a joint naval task force by 2023, forming what *IHS Jane's* called a "partially integrated Finnish-Swedish Air Force," and pledging to work together in many other areas.

Swedish Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist said that the new cooperation "raises the bar" for any possible attacker. *Reuters* noted, "The two countries will not formally be committed to

come to each other's aid in time of war, but Hultqvist said common defense was an option in such a scenario." His Finnish counterpart, Carl Haglund, said, "This gives us a concrete ability to work together, first and foremost in peacetime, but also in times of crisis should we choose to do so."

Then at the start of March, Denmark and Sweden pledged to increase their military cooperation. Their deal focused on peacetime operations, such as exchange of information and shared use of territorial waters and airspace.

Meanwhile, central and Eastern Europe are full of signs that nations are fearful of Russia. Lithuania announced on February 24 that it would reintroduce conscription—enforcing compulsory military service for all men age 19–26—in order to recruit up to 3,500 a year.

In mid-February, Poland launched what Agence France-Presse called "an unprecedented military spending spree" worth \$42 billion over the next 10 years. It will be creating a missile defense system, upgrading its anti-aircraft defense, and investing in hardware from submarines to armored personnel carriers to armored drones. These are merely the most recent developments—Poland has been beefing up its military over the last few years.

"Poland wants to play a bigger role than just being a security consumer," said Gustav Gressel, defense analyst at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "It wants to be a bigger part of a strong European alliance."

Further south, Romania has called for NATO to establish a commando base in its country. Bulgaria has called up 7,306 reservists since the start of 2015—more than the total number of reservists called up in 2011, 2012 or 2013.

Most important is Europe's de facto leader—Germany. Germany had been planning military cuts. Its tank force, numbering 3,500 during the Cold War, is down to 350, and it had been planning to cut that number to 225. However, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported February 26 that these reductions may be scrapped, with Germany instead bringing weapons, including tanks, out of storage. Germany's reserves of stored tanks mean it can increase

the power of its forces quickly.

Toward the end of last year, the German Parliament's budget committee called for an increase in military spending, an increase in the number of tanks and armored vehicles owned by the German Army, and even for the development of a whole new battle tank, a Leopard 3 program.

On a slightly different front, Hans-Georg Maassen, head of the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), warned that Russian intelligence services were reverting to Cold War KGB tactics. Once again, the Russian agencies are running disinformation campaigns and supporting extremist groups to undermine other nations. Maassen also warned that the conflict with Russia was hampering the cooperation needed to fight radical Islam: "We must assume that we too are a target of terrorist attacks and we must prepare accordingly."

"The more bellicose and dangerous Russia grows, the more we must watch Europe," wrote *Trumpet* columnist Brad Macdonald. "[Europe's reaction to Russian ambition](#) is more important than the growing power of Russia itself."

"Few things unite a nation or group of nations more than a mutual external threat," he continued. "Logic informs us that Russia's spiral toward dictatorship will trigger a fear among Europeans that will accelerate the unification of the Continent."

Creating the European army that Jean-Claude Juncker has called for is a huge undertaking. The proudest moments in any European nations' military history are usually the defeat of some other European nation. Asking Europe to come together in a common force is a tall order and will require a powerful incentive.

Russia is providing that incentive. Leaders of EU nations, especially powerful ones like France and Germany, don't see the full danger that threatens them out of Russia—yet. These responses across the Continent are not a panicky run to the exit, but an uncomfortable shuffling of feet. Once they fully realize that danger, their armies will come together—at least for a time.

We're seeing the very beginnings of Europe's response to Russia. As Russia's aggression grows, watch for Europe's response.

 Follow [Richard Palmer](#)

MIDDLE EAST

Syria's Moderate Rebels Defeated **Callum Wood | March 10**

THE "MODERATE" SYRIAN REBEL MOVEMENT HAZZM HAD IT ALL. The group held key areas of Aleppo. Thousands of soldiers trained by the United States—bristling with advanced weapons—flocked to Hazzm's banner. The fighters were well paid, and even had tanks to support them. Yet in less than a week of fighting, the group was completely destroyed.

Another rebel group, the infamous al-Nusra Front, announced on February 25 that it would launch an assault on the Hazzm movement. The group claimed Hazzm's leadership was criminal and corrupt.

The assault was less likely motivated by corruption allegations as it was by the fact Hazzm was supported by the United States.



Fighters in the al-Nusra Front hold a position in the southern countryside of Syria's northern city of Aleppo. The al-Nusra rebel group destroyed the U.S.-backed Hazzm movement in late February.

Within a week of launching its first assault on Hazzm, al-Nusra had completely obliterated the movement. Large stockpiles of weapons and territory controlled by Hazzm were taken over by the radical al-Nusra.

Hazzm's leadership announced the group's dissolution and said its members should move to the Levant Front, which is an umbrella group for the rebels in Aleppo.

This is what the U.S. feared when it first contemplated sending aid to the rebels. Today al-Nusra has reaffirmed that fear for the backers in Washington.

Washington is hesitant to conduct airstrikes and has no desire

to put troops on the ground. What more can it do? The situation in Syria is becoming a lose-lose for hesitant America. It is currently fighting against the [Islamic State](#), and is vehemently opposed to the [Assad regime](#). That leaves the rebels as the only meager alternative. But with each passing day the radicalizing rebels become increasingly less viable.

The Hazzm movement—perhaps America's best hope at successfully arming and establishing the rebels as a credible moderate power—has become extinct. Keep watching as the last vestiges of moderation in the remaining rebel factions go the same way.



Benjamin Netanyahu and Moses **Gerald Flurry, The Key of David | March 13**

ONCE AGAIN, THE JEWS FACE THE THREAT OF ANNIHILATION.



Quds Leader, Commanding Iraqi Forces Against the Islamic State, Alarms Washington

Fox News | March 5

TWICE DESIGNATED A TERRORIST BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, considered responsible for up to 20 percent of American casualties in the Iraq war, Maj. Gen. Qassem Suleimani, the legendary Iranian spymaster and leader of the Quds Force—the elite special operations wing of the hardline Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—is now stirring alarm in Washington for doing something the Obama administration would ordinarily cheer: taking the fight to [the Islamic State] in Iraq.

Photographs circulating on social media show Suleimani operating alongside senior Iraqi officials in the theater in and around Tikrit, the Sunni ancestral home of Saddam Hussein that is located almost equidistant between Mosul, the [Islamic State]-controlled city 120 miles to the north, and Baghdad, the capital of the Iraqi government 100 miles to the south.

The presence of Suleimani at the forefront of Iraqi forces' efforts to reclaim Tikrit from [the Islamic State] control underscores both the expanding influence of Iran on the central Iraqi

government and the increasingly critical role that Shiite militiamen, thought to be operating under Quds command, are playing in the Iraqi fight against [the Islamic State]. Neither development brings pleasure to senior U.S. officials or lawmakers in Congress. ...

"[Suleimani's Quds force] is an organization which has engaged in spreading sectarian terror in Iraq. And now, this is the force that the Iraqi government has turned to for help in order to liberate Tikrit from Islamic State terrorists," [Ali Alfoneh, an Iranian-born scholar at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies,] told Fox News. ...

Such tangled lines of authority and influence are exactly what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had in mind on Tuesday, when he told a joint meeting of Congress: "When it comes to Iran and [the Islamic State], the enemy of your enemy is your enemy."

RELATED: "IS IRAQ ABOUT TO FALL TO IRAN?"

Saudi Nuclear Deal Raises Stakes for Iran Talks

Wall Street Journal | March 11

AS U.S. AND IRANIAN DIPLOMATS INCHED TOWARD PROGRESS ON Tehran's nuclear program last week, Saudi Arabia quietly signed its own nuclear-cooperation agreement with South Korea.

That agreement, along with recent comments from Saudi officials and royals, is raising concerns on Capitol Hill and among

U.S. allies that a deal with Iran, rather than stanching the spread of nuclear technologies, risks fueling it.

Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief, Prince Turki al-Faisal, a member of the royal family, has publicly warned in recent months that Riyadh will seek to match the nuclear

capabilities Iran is allowed to maintain as part of any final agreement reached with world powers. This could include the ability to enrich uranium and to harvest the weapons-grade plutonium discharged in a nuclear reactor's spent fuel.

Several U.S. and Arab officials have voiced concerns about a possible nuclear-arms race erupting in the Middle East, spurred on by Saudi Arabia's regional rivalry with Iran, which has been playing out in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen in recent months. ...

Current and former U.S. officials said there is particular concern about Saudi Arabia's decades long military alliance with Pakistan, a nuclear-armed state with a history of proliferating military technologies. ...

Saudi Arabia, however, has so far balked at accepting

[nuclear-cooperation terms that explicitly ban it from developing nuclear weapons]. "We've been pressing them to agree not to pursue a civilian fuel cycle, but the Saudis refuse," said Gary Samore, who was the White House's top official working on nuclear issues during President Obama's first term. ...

Current and former U.S. officials said they remained skeptical that Pakistan would directly sell or transfer atomic weapons to Saudi Arabia in response to the perceived threat of Iran. But they said they couldn't discount Islamabad deploying some of its weapons in the kingdom, or establishing a nuclear-defense umbrella.

RELATED: "A MYSTERY ALLIANCE" AND "THE DANGER IN U.S. SUPPORT OF THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL"



As Nuclear Talks Drag On, Iran Tightens Grip on Middle East

Stephen Flurry, Trumpet Daily | March 13

THE PROPHESED "KING OF THE SOUTH" NOW HAS A STRANGLEHOLD ON THE MIDDLE EAST.

Follow [Stephen Flurry](#)



What Will Happen to Iran When Khamenei Dies?

David Vejlil | March 11

ON TUESDAY, IRAN'S ASSEMBLY OF EXPERTS CHOSE ULTRACONSERVATIVE hardliner Ayatollah Mohammed Yazdi as its chairman. He defeated Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who is considered more moderate by the West.

The Assembly of Experts selects the nation's [supreme leader](#), who is the real leader of the country. This council is made up of more than 80 high-ranking religious leaders who represent each of Iran's provinces. Currently the council is filled with hardline conservatives.

Reports are surfacing of 75-year-old Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's declining health. Although impossible to tell if the rumors are

true, it is worth considering the effect his death would have on Iran.

The assembly's recent decision reveals the likelihood that if Khamenei were to die soon, he would be replaced by someone at least as conservative and hardline as he is, if not more so. If the next supreme leader is more extreme, he could easily reverse any nuclear deal made with the United States.

Iran's political direction can be forecast by understanding the makeup of its Assembly of Experts, especially when a transition is possible. The *Trumpet* believes Iran will continue to push its aggressive anti-Western agenda as it seeks to gain nuclear capability. Tuesday's election confirms that belief.

Obama Gives Sisi the Netanyahu Treatment

Commentary | March 11

IN A MIDDLE EAST WHERE ISLAMIST TERROR GROUPS AND THE Iranian regime and its allies have been on the offensive in recent years, the one bright spot for the West in the region (other, that is, than Israel) is the way Egypt has returned to its old role as a bulwark of moderation and opposition to extremism. The current government led by former Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has clamped down on Hamas terrorists and has been willing to deploy its armed forces to fight [the Islamic State] in Libya while also clamping down on a Muslim Brotherhood

movement that seeks to transform Egypt into another Islamist state. Yet despite this, the Obama administration is unhappy with Egypt.

Much to Cairo's consternation, the United States is squeezing its government on the military aid it needs to fight [the Islamic State] in Libya and Sinai terrorists. As the Israeli government has already learned to its sorrow, the Egyptians now understand that being an ally of the United States is a lot less comfortable position than to be a foe like Iran.

The ostensible reason for the holdup in aid is that the Egyptian government is a human-rights violator. Those concerns are accurate. Sisi's government has been ruthless in cracking down on the same Muslim Brotherhood faction that was running the country until a popular coup brought it down in the summer of 2013. But contrary to the illusions of an Obama administration that hastened the fall of Hosni Mubarak and then foolishly embraced his Muslim Brotherhood successors, democracy was never one of the available options in Egypt.

The choice in Egypt remains stark. It's either going to be run by Islamists bent on taking the most populous Arab country down the dark road of extremism or by a military regime that will

keep that from happening. ...

But rather than that endearing [Sisi] to the administration, [his] outstanding record has earned Sisi the Netanyahu treatment. Indeed, like other moderate Arab leaders in the Middle East, Sisi understands that President Obama has no great love for his country's allies. ...

This development raises serious questions not only about U.S.-Egyptian relations but the administration's vision for the region. ...

RELATED: "HOW PRESIDENT OBAMA'S CAIRO SPEECH WILL SHAKE THE NATIONS"

T **Could America Catch Iran Building Nuclear Weapons?** **Callum Wood | March 9**

ON THE EVE OF ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU's speech to the United States Congress, President Obama said that while Iran would likely be allowed to enrich uranium, it would be heavily monitored—ensuring that “there’s at least a year between us seeing [Iran] trying to get a nuclear weapon and them actually being able to obtain one.”

But should the U.S. be so confident that it would catch Iran before it created a nuclear bomb? Unfortunately the track record says it should not.

India is one example. Its nuclear program began as a peaceful one, and it received support from Britain, Canada and the United States. India's leaders continually promised that the atomic research was all for peaceful purposes. But the call for a nuclear India grew after China defeated India in the brief border war of 1962. Many in India thought a nuclear deterrent to China was vital.

U.S. reports about India's breakout capacity began to surface through the '60s as India's leaders began to talk about potential changes to their peaceful nuclear policies. By 1964, India had weapons-grade plutonium. By 1972, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi approved underground nuclear explosions for “peaceful purposes.”

While India made headway toward developing nuclear weapons, its neighbor Pakistan tended to its own plans.

With the aid of Canada, Pakistan set up its first nuclear power station in 1972. Pakistan made continuous promises—even backing them with actions—that it would not produce nuclear weapons. Then India detonated its first nuclear device. With relations between the two nations so tumultuous, Pakistan argued that it needed nukes of its own, thus sparking a two-nation arms race.



A general view of Iran's heavy water facility at Arak

In spite of sanctions, Pakistan test-fired an array of nuclear-capable missiles. In 1998, Pakistan shocked people around the world when it tested its first nuclear weapon.

North Korea is perhaps the iconic example of the U.S.'s inability to stop a nation from going nuclear. In late 1991, North and South Korea agreed on a nuclear ban. In 1993, North Korea signed a pledge to never develop nuclear weapons. The CIA had reason to believe that the North Koreans had at least two bombs by that stage, but didn't have sufficient proof to act. Within a year, North Korea quit the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In 2006, despite sanctions and condemnation from around the world, North Korea tested its first nuclear bomb. A second came in 2009, and North Korea's leaders proclaimed that they were “fully ready for battle against the United States.”

What is to stop Iran from doing the same thing?

EUROPE

Defiant Greece at Daggers Drawn With EU Creditors **Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, Telegraph | March 9**

RELATIONS BETWEEN GREECE AND EUROPE'S CREDITOR POWERS are dangerously close to breaking point. Both sides have issued ultimatums, each insisting angrily on fixed positions and

lashing out at each other with barely concealed animosity.

“If they decide to kick us out, the damage will be greater for them,” said Manolis Glezos, the wartime resister who ripped the

Nazi flag from the Acropolis in 1941.

Mr. Glezos, a Syriza MEP and the party's venerated elder statesman, told the *Daily Telegraph* that his movement never wished to take Greece out of monetary union but will not shrink from doing so if EMU [Economic and Monetary Union] authorities insist on suffocating austerity. ...

Far from subsiding, the defiant language from Athens is growing louder. "If Europe leaves us in crisis, we will flood it with migrants," said Panos Kammenos, the defense minister and leader of the Independent Greeks Party.

"Too bad for Berlin if there are some jihadis from Islamic State in that wave of millions. If they strike us, we will strike them," he told *La Repubblica*, vowing to give illegal migrants valid documents and open Europe's Schengen frontiers to all comers.

"Relations have reached a new low. It's turning into an arms race," said Mats Persson from Open Europe. "These comments are a recipe for matters to get out of hand, and it is becoming increasingly hard for Germany to back down."

Greek Premier Alexis Tsipras is barely more diplomatic than his ministers. ... To drive home his threat, Mr. Tsipras compared the eurozone to a woolen jumper. "Once it begins to unravel, you can't stop it any more," he said.

Yet the Eurogroup did in fact reject Greece's reform proposals in Brussels today, and in caustic terms. "We have to stop wasting time and really start talks seriously," said Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the group's chief. ...

If Europe fails to defuse the crisis after all and precipitates an EMU breakup, any pledges to defend Portugal, Italy and Spain

against contagion would be greatly devalued.

They may also embolden Mr. Tsipras, since they appear to confirm his calculated gamble that the Eurogroup is bluffing and will have to yield in the end as greater geostrategic pressure is brought to bear.

Yet Mr. Tsipras must equally tread with care. ...

This moment of decision may already be close. Last week, Greece requested a €2 billion (US\$2.1 billion) increase in emergency liquidity ceiling in order to offset deposit flight and keep banks afloat. The ECB granted €500 million. This has been exhausted. ...

Athens is down to its final cash reserves. "We have money to pay salaries and pensions of public employees. For the rest we will see," said Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis. ...

It is clear that the four-month interim deal agreed in February between Syriza and EMU failed to address the true nature of Greece's crisis and is drifting towards collapse. ...

"Watch closely. Germany will use this crisis to FORCE Europe to unite more tightly. In the process, some eurozone countries will be forced out of the union. When that happens, the pundits will say European unification is dead, that the European Union has failed. DON'T LISTEN TO THEM! ... Europe is going to emerge from this crisis with MORE power, not less!"
—Gerald Flurry, *Trumpet*, February 2011

More Union in European Defense

EU Observer | March 11

ONE OF THE EU'S SO-CALLED FOUNDING FATHERS, JEAN MONNET, has taught Europeans that "Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises."

Multiple emergencies and rapidly evolving global trends have undermined the European Union's role as a security actor in recent years.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and destabilization of eastern Ukraine, its provocations of EU member states' maritime and air defenses have delivered a blow to the post-Cold War security order and have revived awareness about the possibility of military attack and occupation in Europe.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Syria is bleeding out far over the country's borders.

Libya is rapidly descending into a vortex of violence, allowing armed smugglers to process ever greater numbers of migrants hazarding the journey across the Mediterranean, and jihadi extremists to stage terrorist attacks. ...

Rather than being surrounded by a ring of friends, the EU is surrounded by a ring of fire stretching from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa, through the Middle East and the Caucasus up to the new front lines in Eastern Europe.

No other global player is facing so much mayhem in its strategic neighborhood.

But at the same time, and sadly, security and defense are the weakest links in the European integration project. ...

Differences between member states in threat perceptions, divergences in intentions and preferences and, in some cases, lack of mutual trust and solidarity have prevented the emergence of a common strategic culture and hampered the creation of joint structures, procedures and assets at the EU level.

Yet, the EU Treaty demands and permits a great deal more in terms of common security and defense activities.

By national navel-gazing, member states' political leaders are not only in denial of threats faced throughout the EU, they also underestimate the degree of expectation among the European public, which for the past 10 years has consistently polled over 70 percent in favor of a broad European project in the area of defense.

It is high time that EU member states took bold and concrete steps towards a more efficient and effective framework for military cooperation. ...

Member states could achieve much more value for money than the €190 billion (US\$200.2 billion) that they spend to keep up 28 national armies, comprising roughly 1.5 million service personnel.

In addition to the obvious economic costs, political, moral and strategic imperatives urge the EU to step up its efforts in defense cooperation, in full coherence with NATO.

The EU's strategic, institutional, capabilities and resources cooperation in the field of defense needs to be strengthened. Ultimately, further integration should amount to a European Defense Union. ...

Although the process of bringing European armies to a more structured cooperation and, where appropriate, closer integration, will certainly be a complex one, the numerous crises facing Europe have made change possible.

These crises also offer an opportunity to secure a more peaceful and prosperous future for the EU.

“Working together could allow European nations to cut costs without cutting their military power. Nations could get rid of overlapping areas and focus on building a mutually dependent military. ... If the financial crisis means that Europe’s army works together, they could emerge much stronger when taken as a whole.”—theTrumpet.com, Aug. 19, 2010

ASIA

Has It Really Taken This TV Show to Make Us Grasp Vladimir Putin’s Threat?

Telegraph | March 11

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN IS CLEARLY TAKING GREAT PRIDE IN the role he played last year in returning Crimea to Mother Russia. In the short clip that has been broadcast on Russian television promoting the forthcoming documentary, *Crimea: the Road to the Motherland*, the president openly boasts of his own personal contribution to returning the territory to Russian control.

[P]utin relates how he ... told commanders from the army and security services that “we are obliged to start working on the return of Crimea to Russia.” Within days, hundreds of Russian special forces had overrun Crimea, raising the Russian flag over captured government buildings and expelling the Ukrainian military.

What is remarkable about this brief glimpse into Mr. Putin’s role in the crisis, where his comments are interspersed with footage of Russian attack helicopters flying into action, is not so much his candor. Most people long ago reached the conclusion that the Kremlin was behind the reunification of Crimea with Russia.

The really fascinating fact to emerge from this documentary ... is the confirmation that the Russian leader consistently told barefaced lies to the outside world for the duration of the crisis. For example, at a press conference held in Moscow last March, which was broadcast to a global audience, he stated unequivocally that “there are no Russian troops active in Crimea.” And yet now he is telling everyone that, far from having no knowledge of Russian involvement in the province, he personally ordered Russia’s military intervention, which resulted in Crimea’s formal annexation

by Moscow later that month. ...

[T]he Russian president’s apparent willingness to tell blatant lies on an issue of such global significance is no laughing matter, particularly for those Western policymakers who have the unenviable task of trying to work out how best to deal with his increasingly aggressive attitude. On the contrary, the fact that Mr. Putin clearly lied about Russia’s involvement in the Crimean crisis should give the West serious cause for thought about how it deals with the Russian leader in the years to come. ...

Mr. Putin’s clumsy attempts at being economical with the truth would have a certain comedic value were it not for the fact that his desire to rebuild Russia as a major military power now poses the gravest security challenge Europe has faced since the end of the Cold War. For at the same time as Mr. Putin is indulging in mind-games with his foes, he is overseeing a multi-billion-[dollar] revamp of Russia’s armed forces. He is doing so, moreover, at a time when all NATO’s major military powers—including the U.S. and Britain—are undertaking drastic reductions to their own defense budgets.

Mr. Putin, of course, insists we have nothing to fear from the Kremlin’s military build-up He also says that Western concerns are unfounded about potential Russian designs on other parts of Eastern and central Europe, as well as the Baltic states. But after all the barefaced lies he has told us over Crimea, only a fool would now take the Russian president’s protestations of innocence at face value.

China and Russia: Allies Not Frenemies in Central Asia

Financial Times | March 11

OFTEN LIKENED TO BEING “BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE,” Central Asia’s relatively isolated position has required it to maintain consistent and balanced good relations with two giant neighbors, China and Russia. ...

Media attention has mostly focused on the surge in aspirant Chinese investment in the region coming “at the expense of Russia,” with the economic downturn luring Central Asian governments towards China’s trade and investment prowess.

Nevertheless, it is also clear that Russia remains a crucial partner and ally not just for Central Asian states themselves, but for ensuring the stability of China’s investments in the region, in particular its energy supplies.

Indeed, despite the recent pain caused by Central Asia’s economic alliance with Russia, countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan appear to be making what amounts to a political decision to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, which currently includes Kazakhstan, Belarus and, most recently, Armenia. ...

Russia-led structures such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, beyond bland gestures of Sino-Russian geopolitical alliance and common interest, are acquiring real significance through the emphasis on maintaining, expanding and modernizing Russia’s network of military bases in countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia. Russian bases remain strategic for the security of Central Asian governments

themselves, since nearly their entire domestic military budget goes to Russia.

[S]ino-Russian cooperation is maintained out of a common interest to keep the Central Asian region stable. Chinese investment is required to buffer stagnant inward foreign direct investment flows into Central Asia from Russia.

However, Beijing needs Russia to provide security in a politically complex region subject to periodic unrest, as a means to ensure its massive investments into the region's energy and infrastructure sectors. This is particularly crucial given the security imperatives in China's own restive Xinjiang province, through which all energy supplies pass.

This pattern of Sino-Russian cooperation is arguably being replicated elsewhere, such as in the ambitious pending construction of the Nicaragua canal, whereby China will finance the majority and Russia will provide military and other forms of security during the construction process.

While media reports often emphasize the "historical distrust" between China and Russia, evidenced by long-drawn and sometimes acrimonious negotiations over bilateral gas supply contracts, it is clear that China does not aspire to undermine Russia's sociopolitical and security influence in the region, while Russia in turn is not resisting China's economic encroachment into the

region. It might be a stretch to call the relationship symbiotic, but it is certainly mutually tolerant.

"When these Asia nations—extremely powerful nuclear-armed countries—begin to show solidarity with each other regarding moves like that, what does that portend for the world? I tell you it is woe to the world. It will cause many serious problems. And it is going to affect everyone. ... This Asian cooperation blindsided many in the West. When Russia took Crimea, even top-notch analysts ... were convinced China would side with the West against Moscow. U.S. President Barack Obama said the nations of the world were 'largely united' in believing Putin had violated Ukraine's territory. The Trumpet has never made that mistake in reading Asia's powerhouses. Actually we have been proclaiming for over 50 years that Russia, China and other Asian nations would ally themselves in the end time. And we are in that end time now."

—Gerald Flurry, *Trumpet*, May-June 2014

China Now No. 3 Defense Importer **China Daily | March 11**

THE CHINESE MAINLAND WAS THE WORLD'S THIRD-LARGEST defense importer in 2014, according to a report by global consultancy IHS.

The Chinese mainland surpassed the Taiwan region and United Arab Emirates last year, moving from fifth place, ranking only behind Saudi Arabia and India. Russia is currently the largest defense exporter to the Chinese mainland.

The Chinese mainland "continues to require military aerospace assistance from Russia, and its total defense procurement budget will continue to rise very quickly," said Paul Burton, director of defense industry and budgets at IHS Aerospace, Defense and Security, in a statement Sunday. ...

Seven of the top 10 defense importers are within the Asia-Pacific region. The six others are: India (second), Taiwan province, Australia, Republic of Korea, Indonesia (fifth to eighth) and

Pakistan (10th).

Among those, India was the world's largest defense importer and the largest defense market for U.S. exports in 2012 and 2013, until it was replaced by Saudi Arabia last year. The IHS report also projects that South Korea will become a "regional leader" in terms of defense imports.

"I am not sure what level of defense purchase constitutes an arms race," said June Teufel Dreyer, professor of political science at the University of Miami. "However, a number of countries in the region have increased their arms purchases in recent years." ...

The IHS report also said China was the world's eighth-largest defense exporter in 2014. The world's five largest military exporters are the U.S., Russia, France, the UK and Germany.

In 2014, global defense trade increased for the sixth straight year to \$64.4 billion, up from \$56.8 billion.

Russia and India to Work on 5th-Generation Upgrade to Su-35 Fighter **Want China Times | March 10**

RUSSIA AND INDIA HAVE SIGNED AN AGREEMENT TO JOINTLY develop a fifth-generation upgrade of the Su-35 Super Flanker multirole fighter, according to a report published March 8 on Virginia-based military affairs website Defense News.

The fighter will be a fifth-generation fighter like the U.S. Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor and F-35 Lightning II, as opposed to the fourth-generation version of the Su-35 over which Russia and China are currently negotiating a deal. ...

Defense News cited a Russian military insider as stating that Moscow and New Delhi have signed an agreement to design what

Russia is calling the fifth-generation version of the Su-35 in India, which will see an Indian variant of the fighter created called the Su-35S. ...

The Defense News report suggested that the reason Russia has suddenly announced the development program for the stealth fighter is because they are trying to undercut France following the refusal of Paris to provide Russia with two Mistral-class amphibious assault ships.

In 2012, New Delhi decided to buy 126 Dassault Rafale multirole fighters from the French company but they have been

unable to reach a final agreement due to the technology transfer involved and the price. A Russian industry source cited in the report said the Su-35S will cost only \$85 million, very competitive when compared with the Rafale, and poses a threat to the deal between France and India. ...

There had previously been a lot of buzz in the media about

Putin Pulls Out of Post-Cold War Arms Treaty **The Fiscal Times | March 10**

AT A TIME WHEN EUROPEAN OFFICIALS CONCERNED ABOUT Russian aggression in Eastern Europe are openly calling for the creation of a Pan-European army, Moscow has announced it will cease all involvement in a major arms control treaty that was signed at the end of the Cold War.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was an agreement signed in 1990 between the 16 North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries and six Warsaw Pact countries. It set caps on the number of soldiers, tanks, artillery pieces and other non-nuclear military assets that could be stationed in Europe.

State-run media reported that the decision to “withdraw completely” from the treaty was announced by Anton Mazur, head of the Russian delegation arms control talks in Vienna.

Philippines Demands China Stop Maritime Land Reclamation **Want China Times | March 10**

ENCOURAGED BY A STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES, THE Government of the Philippines demanded China put an end to its land reclamation program in the disputed South China Sea, the *Sputnik News* based in Moscow reported on March 10.

China is undertaking a vast project to reclaim land for future military use on several reefs under the Chinese administration in the contested maritime region. They include Hughes Reef, Fiery Cross Reef, Johnson South Reef, Gaven Reef and Mischief Reef in the Spratly archipelago. Mischief Reef is the closest of these reefs to the Philippines, located 113 kilometers from the western province of Palawan, and Manila feels it will be under direct threat from the People's Liberation Army after air and naval facilities are established.

Jen Psaki, spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State, said on March 9 that China's land reclamation and construction activities are fueling greater anxiety within the region. ...

China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, defended China's right to do as it pleases in what he called the country's “own backyard”

China becoming the first country to take delivery of an Su-35. According to the previous report on the website, China is set to sign a deal on May 19 to buy 24 Su-35 fighters from Russia. A Russian official has stated that the deal involves the fourth-generation Su-35, not the fifth-generation Su-35S. The official added, however, that China will be the first country in the world to buy the plane. ...

Russia's withdrawal decision is very nearly a formality. Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2007 suspended Russia's observation of the treaty after the other signatories would not agree to changes, in the form of an “adapted” treaty. Russia had felt those changes were necessary because of a realignment of global power away from Russia after the Cold War. ...

The announcement comes just days after European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called for creating a single army to represent the entire European Union, citing ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine as a primary reason. “A common European army would convey a clear message to Russia that we are serious about defending our European values,” Juncker said.

and would not stop the reclamation due to objections from other nations. Wang said the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia all have airstrips in the South China Sea, and China should have one too. ...

“[T]he U.S. has said before that it may not always be willing to support its longtime ally the Philippines, and a time approaches when American backing will not be available for any of the nations China threatens. As China's might continues to grow and American will fades, watch for Beijing's belligerent behavior to simultaneously increase. The Philippines and other Asian nations will be compelled to abandon the sinking U.S. ship, and to set aside their intercontinental disputes.”
—theTrumpet.com, April 23, 2012

AFRICA/LATIN AMERICA

France to Increase West Africa Troops to Support Boko Haram Fight **Reuters | March 11**

FRANCE IS INCREASING ITS WEST AFRICAN COUNTERINSURGENCY force to support regional forces fighting Nigerian Islamist militant group Boko Haram, Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian

said on Wednesday.

France has headquartered its more than 3,000-strong Sahel counterinsurgency force, Barkhane, in the Chadian capital

N'Djamena, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the Nigerian border.

Until now those troops have largely been tasked with tracking al Qaeda-linked militants spanning across the Sahara from Mauritania in the west and southern Libya in the east. ...

He said the troops would provide support to forces fighting around Lake Chad, where Boko Haram has in recent months increasingly threatened regional countries. ...

Paris has ... already sent about 40 military advisers to Niger's southern border with Nigeria to help coordinate military action by the regional powers fighting Boko Haram and has been operating reconnaissance missions near the Nigerian border and sharing intelligence. ...

RELATED: "EUROPE'S 'RAPID DEPLOYMENT' IN MALI"

ANGLO-AMERICA

Ferguson Fake-Out: Justice Department's Bogus Report

New York Post | March 9

ADDRESSING THE NATION FROM SELMA, ALABAMA, ON SATURDAY, President Obama said that while racism may be "no longer endemic," as it was 50 years ago, his Justice Department's report on Ferguson shows that the "nation's racial history still casts its long shadow upon us."

Sorry: The Justice report doesn't prove disparate treatment, let alone discrimination.

In fact, it looks more like something ginned up to distract from the embarrassing fact that Justice (in another report released the same day) wound up fully validating the findings of the Ferguson grand jury.

Racism is serious, and those engaging in it should be shamed—but we should have real evidence before accusing others of it. And every one of the Justice report's main claims of evidence of discrimination falls short.

Starting with the primary numerical claim. The report notes on Page 4: "Ferguson's law-enforcement practices overwhelmingly impact African-Americans."

"Data collected by the Ferguson Police Department from 2012 to 2014 shows that African-Americans account for 85 percent of vehicle stops, 90 percent of citations, and 93 percent of arrests made by FPD officers, despite comprising only 67 percent of Ferguson's population."

Those statistics don't prove racism, because blacks don't commit traffic offenses at the same rate as other population groups.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics' 2011 Police-Public Contact Survey indicates that, nationwide, blacks were 31 percent more likely than whites to be pulled over for a traffic stop.

Ferguson is a black-majority town. If its blacks were pulled over at the same rate as blacks nationally, they'd account for 87.5

percent of traffic stops.

In other words, the numbers actually suggest that Ferguson police may be slightly less likely to pull over black drivers than are their national counterparts. They certainly don't show that Ferguson is a hotbed of racism.

Critics may assert that that "31 percent more likely" figure simply shows that racism is endemic to police forces nationwide.

Hmm: The survey also reveals that men are 42 percent more likely than women to be pulled over for traffic stops. Should we conclude that police are biased against men, or that men drive more recklessly?

In fact, blacks die in car accidents at a rate about twice their share of car owners. ...

Another major complaint in the Justice report: "Most strikingly, the court issues municipal arrest warrants not on the basis of public-safety needs, but rather as a routine response to missed court appearances and required fine payments."

If you think that this is unique to Ferguson, try not paying your next speeding ticket. ...

Finally, for "direct evidence of racial bias," the report describes seven e-mails from Ferguson police officers from 2008 to 2011 that Justice describes as offensive to blacks, women, Muslims, President Obama and his wife, and possibly people of mixed race.

But this begs some big questions: Did only one or two of the 53 officers send the e-mails? Did the objectionable e-mails end in 2011 because those officers no longer worked for the department or were told to stop?

The Justice Department's report reads as a prosecutor's brief, not an unbiased attempt to get at the truth, with evidence carefully selected and portrayed in the strongest possible light. ...

Argument Over the Remote Control? Call the Old Bill

Laura Perrins, The Conservative Woman | March 11

WHERE WOULD WE BE WITHOUT THE EXPONENTIAL INCREASE IN the divorce and illegitimacy rate with all those children being raised without fathers?

Yes indeed, things have turned out amazingly well for some

families in Britain.

Many of them do not have fathers but that does not mean they are not getting on OK, apart from those few occasions when one must call the police to sort out the odd argument. And those

times when single mums get assaulted by their own children.

On Tuesday, the *Times* told us that some families were relying on the police to sort out domestic disputes. Some families are struggling to cope and impose discipline on children without an extended family. I imagine the lack of a nuclear family does not help either.

In one case the police were called over a dispute about the remote control. I can see it now—argument over the remote—call the Old Bill. Argument over the last Rolo—call the Old Bill. Argument over bath time—call the Old Bill. ... The police stepping in to impose boundaries where once the fathers would do it. ...

The mothers try their best, no doubt—probably pulling 12-hour shifts at the supermarket to put food on the table, but it cannot be easy. And if you live in a poor neighborhood where gang culture is dominant it will be difficult to compete with the

gang. The gang that gives hierarchy and patriarchy that is not present at home. What can you do but call the Old Bill?

Samantha Callan, associate director for families at the Center for Social Justice, said that parents needed greater support. She admitted, though, that changing family structures had made the task of child rearing more difficult, particularly for lone women.

“If you have teenage children, and especially where there is not a father figure or another figure of authority in the home, very many parents find themselves unable to control their children and there is little help for them,” she said.

What we need to realize is that more state intervention is not the answer. We spend taxpayers’ money propping up the single-parent family and we need more taxpayers’ money for “parental support.”

And on and on it goes, just throwing good money after bad.

Major Survey Finds Record-Low Confidence in Government **Associated Press | March 11**

AMERICANS’ CONFIDENCE IN ALL THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT is at or near record lows, according to a major survey that has measured attitudes on the subject for 40 years.

The 2014 General Social Survey finds only 23 percent of Americans have a great deal of confidence in the Supreme Court, 11 percent in the executive branch, and 5 percent in Congress. By contrast, half have a great deal of confidence in the military.

The survey is conducted by the independent research organization NORC at the University of Chicago. ...

The 11 percent who say they’re confident in the presidency approaches a record low measured by the same survey in 1996, when just 10 percent said they had a great deal of confidence in the executive branch. The 44 percent who now say they have hardly any confidence at all is at a record high. ...

In the 2014 survey, just 3 percent of Republicans say they have a lot of confidence in the presidency, down from a record-high

45 percent who said so in 2002, when overall confidence in the presidency was also at the highest point the survey has measured, at 27 percent. Then, President George W. Bush was still riding a crest of support in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

But confidence among Democrats has dropped some in recent years, too, from 25 percent in 2010 to 18 percent in 2014.

Just 1 in 10 independents expressed a lot of confidence in the presidency in 2014

“And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you ... And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel.”
—1 Samuel 8:11-19

Inside the Currency Wars **Gary Shilling, Bloomberg | March 6**

ALMOST ALL THE WORLD’S CURRENCIES ARE DROPPING AGAINST the U.S. dollar. The decline is being driven mostly by governments and central banks bent on cheapening their currencies to gain an advantage in global trade and boost their weak economies.

Since December, 22 major foreign currencies have declined an average of 4.5 percent against the greenback. A cheaper currency makes exports less expensive and thus more attractive to foreign buyers. A devalued currency also drives up import prices, which discourage domestic consumers from purchasing foreign goods.

Group of 20 finance officials recently pronounced that the deliberate weakening of one’s currency in pursuit of domestic growth is acceptable, while devaluation to gain a foreign-trade advantage is not. I fail to see the distinction, but U.S. Federal

Reserve Chair Janet Yellen does.

In a February 24 Senate testimony, Yellen opposed congressional efforts to add to trade agreements legal sanctions against countries that manipulate their currency because they could hobble the Fed. “Monetary policy,” she said, “can have repercussions on exchange rates, but I really think it’s not right to call that currency manipulation and to put it in the same bucket as interventions in exchange markets that are really geared towards changing the competitive landscape to the advantage of a country.”

But the Fed faces a dilemma: As other countries devalue against the greenback, the U.S. can’t purposely knock down the dollar. As the world’s reserve currency, what could it be devalued against? A stronger dollar makes U.S. imports cheaper, which forces domestic producers to stay competitive by lowering prices

and laying off employees to cut costs. A rising buck, then, works against the Fed's goal of price stability and full employment.

Currency movements are bedeviling other central banks, too.

Call it currency manipulation or domestic economic policy ... almost every country in the world wants their money to be cheaper.

Labor Force Participation Has Hovered Near 37-Year-Low for 11 Months

CNS News | March 6

THE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE HOVERED BETWEEN 62.9 percent and 62.7 percent in the 11 months from April 2014 through February, and has been 62.9 percent or lower in 13 of the 17 months since October 2013.

Prior to that, the last time the rate was below 63 percent was 37 years ago, in March 1978 when it was 62.8 percent, the same rate it was in February. ...

The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the civilian non-institutional population who participated in the labor force by either having a job during the month or actively seeking one. ...

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) points to the aging of the baby-boom generation as a key factor affecting the labor

force participation rate [W]ith the passage of every year after 2000, a segment of the baby-boomer population passes into the 55-years-and-older age group, thus moving from a group with a high participation rate in the labor force to an age category with a much lower participation rate, causing the overall participation rate to decrease, BLS explained.

In February, 92,898,000 people did not participate in the labor force. These Americans did not have a job and were not actively trying to find one. When President Obama took office in January 2009, there were 80,529,000 Americans who were not participating in the office, which means that since then, 12,369,000 Americans have left the workforce. ...

Secret Service Agents Disrupted Bomb Investigation at White House

Washington Post | March 12

TWO SECRET SERVICE AGENTS SUSPECTED OF BEING UNDER THE influence while striking a White House security barricade drove through an active bomb investigation and directly beside the suspicious package, according to current and former government officials familiar with the incident.

These and other new details about the March 4 incident emerged Thursday from interviews and from police records obtained by the *Washington Post*.

The revelations spurred fresh questions Thursday from lawmakers about whether the newly appointed director of the Secret Service, Joseph P. Clancy, is capable of turning around the troubled agency. ...

On Thursday night, Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), the chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and the panel's ranking Democrat, Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (Md.), sent Clancy a letter asking for a detailed briefing on the incident, which they called "extremely serious" and said raised concerns about the path to reforming the agency.

"This incident also raises important questions about what additional steps should be taken to reform the agency and whether the problems at the [Secret Service] run deeper than the recently

replaced top-tier of management," they wrote. ...

The March 4 incident unfolded on a hectic night for Secret Service officers guarding the White House.

About 10:25 that night, a woman hopped out of a blue Toyota near the southeast entrance of the White House on 15th Street NW and, holding a package wrapped in a green shirt, approached an agent.

"I'm holding a [expletive] bomb!" she yelled, according to a government official with knowledge of the incident.

The woman then put the object on the ground and retreated to her car, the official said. The agent ran to the car and opened the front passenger-side door and ordered the woman to get out. But she then put the car in reverse and accelerated, striking the agent with the open door. The agent reached inside the car and forced it into park, said the government official, but the woman was able to shift it back into drive and drive forward, again hitting the agent and forcing him to jump out of the way.

The woman then sped off. ...

The Secret Service agents under investigation are Marc Conolly, the second-in-command on Obama's detail, and Ogilvie, a senior supervisor in the Washington field office.