

Pope Francis addresses the crowd in St. Peter's Square after mass in the Vatican.



## Pope Apologizes for Killing Protestants

Richard Palmer | February 3

**P**OPE FRANCIS OFFICIALLY APOLOGIZED FOR PERSECUTING PROTESTANTS on January 25, as he unveiled plans for a radical push for unity during the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

"As the bishop of Rome and pastor of the Catholic Church, I would like to invoke mercy and forgiveness for the non-evangelical behavior of Catholics toward Christians of other churches," he said. "At the same time, I invite all Catholic brothers and sisters to forgive if today, or in the past, they have suffered offense by other Christians."

"Non-evangelical behavior" is an interesting euphemism for the massive violence unleashed in the wake of the Reformation. Modern scholars estimate 50 million died in the religious

violence that followed in persecutions, counter-persecutions and religious wars.

But the pope and Protestant leaders are prepared to put all that aside as they get ready for the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

The commemorations will kick off on October 31 this year, 499 years to the day since Martin Luther is traditionally held to have nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg. These 95 Theses outlined Luther's disagreement with the Catholic Church, and their publication began the great splitting away of protesting churches from Rome.

In January, the pope announced that to mark the beginning of this 500th anniversary year, he would travel to Lund, Sweden,

where the Lutheran World Federation was founded, and hold a joint service with Lutherans. The two groups will hold a joint worship service with a common prayer.

This will only be the beginning of what could be a dramatic year. [Lutheran leaders](#) have said in the past that they hoped to fully heal their divide with Rome during this 500th anniversary year.

[Catholic-Lutheran unity](#) has already taken great strides over the past couple of decades. In 1999, the Lutheran World Federation signed a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification with the Vatican. The doctrine of justification was at the heart of Luther's disagreement with the Catholic Church that led to his excommunication—now that disagreement has been overcome.

In 2007, the Catholic Church along with Lutheran, Orthodox, Methodist, Anglican and Armenian-Apostolic churches in Germany all agreed to recognize each other's baptisms as valid.

"Five hundred years ago, wars were fought over the very issues about which Lutherans and Roman Catholics have now achieved consensus," said Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's presiding bishop, Elizabeth A. Eaton. There are still some points of disagreement, and talk of achieving full communion in 2017 has died down in recent years, but so much of the heavy lifting has been done already.

The Catholic Church is making great strides in its push for unity with other churches. The other great split in the church—the Orthodox Schism that was formalized in 1054—is close to being healed. The Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion are also drawing close.

In 2013, America's largest Presbyterian church, along with other major Protestant groups, signed an agreement with the Catholic Church [recognizing each other's baptisms](#). The Catholic Church is even making progress with Pentecostals. Pope Francis has held receptions with top American televangelists, including Joel Osteen's visit in 2014.

In 2014, the pope sent a recorded message to Kenneth Cope-land Ministries, a large [Pentecostal group, seeking unity](#). "Brothers and sisters, Luther's protest is over. Is yours?" asked a speaker at the event. The pope also beseeched the audience, "I am [yearning] that this separation comes to an end and gives us communion."

Many of these groups have loudly condemned the Vatican for

hundreds of years. For them to be seeking unity now is a major change.

It is interesting that the Catholic Church is focusing on healing this divide while Europe as a whole grows increasingly desperate for unity. The *Trumpet* has long said that the Catholic Church would play a major role in unifying Europe. "Once again, the only UNIFYING authority which the coming 10 nations of Roman Catholic Europe can accept is the pope of Rome!" Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in the July 1961 *Plain Truth* magazine.

Even back then, Mr. Armstrong saw the potential for religious unity and political unity to be linked.

"The nations of Europe *want* to go together. The Common Market is knocking down the chief competitive barrier—trade," he wrote in that same article. "Another serious barrier has been religion. Protestants have been unwilling to submit to the authority of the pope. But that barrier, too, is fast crumbling. Everywhere there is a relaxing of Protestant opposition against the Roman Catholic Church."


"Today, both economic and religious barriers to a United Europe are greatly weakened," he wrote. "The pope is the one political leader who can demolish the political barrier. The stage is set. All that is needed is a new fear for their common safety from Russia."

But would the Vatican be better placed to unify Europe after going even further toward unity with its daughter churches? Or could church unity follow on the heels of European unity? It seems plausible that the two could be related.

Bringing the church bearing the name of Martin Luther back into the fold would certainly be a huge prestige boost for the Catholic Church.

Of course, there will be holdouts who will not return to Rome voluntarily. These would have to be dealt with after a strong political union is in place.

Today we see an economic crisis, fear of terrorism, and fear of Russia all pushing Europe together. Meanwhile the Catholic Church has already made great headway toward unity with Lutherans. Full unity would not just be of interest to religious people—it would have real-world, geopolitical implications. As Mr. Armstrong wrote, "[T]he stage is set."

For more on what this unity will mean for the world and how it will be achieved, read the article "[Returning to the Fold](#)" from our free booklet *He Was Right*.  Follow [Richard Palmer](#)

## MIDDLE EAST

# TrumpetDaily

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## Iran's North Korea Loophole

Commentary | February 3

IT'S AN ITEM THAT DOESN'T APPEAR IN THE WHITE HOUSE POWER points celebrating the nuclear [deal] with Iran and its supposed curtailment of Iran's nuclear work, but the off-site loophole Secretary of State John Kerry, Undersecretary Wendy Sherman and their team left is about to [be] blown a mile wide. ...

Kerry can brag that the inspections regime is rigorous (it isn't) and that Iran has stopped all its work on possible military dimensions (PMD) of a nuclear weapon (that's hope above change). In reality, however, [President Barack] Obama and Kerry are completely blind to any work Iran is doing inside North Korea. After all, Iran wants to operate outside the purview of inspections, and North Korea wants cash. Thanks to how Kerry constructed the deal, Iran now has \$100 billion with which to play.

Now, word comes that North Korea is ... on the verge of the test of a new solid-fuel missile that could potentially deliver a nuclear warhead into the United States. As long-time Korea watcher Gordon Chang notes:

"At Sohae last year, the North Koreans raised the height of the gantry by more than 10 meters to accommodate more powerful launch vehicles. That leads [Bruce] Bechtol to predict we will see 'a new, larger version of the Taepodong,' North Korea's

longest-range missile. And we should expect Iranians at the site for the event. Iran has funded the new booster, which Pyongyang's technicians have been developing for at least two years. 'If,' Bechtol writes, 'the missile the North Koreans launch is in fact the larger version of the Taepodong and the launch is successful, we can expect to see this missile proliferated to Iran.'"

The Iran-angle is something upon which South Korean observers have also picked up. According to the Yonhap News Agency:

"While announcing fresh sanctions on Iran last month, the Treasury confirmed that Tehran and Pyongyang have cooperated to develop an 80-ton rocket booster, with Iranian missile technicians visiting the North for the project in the past several years .... U.S. military officials have expressed serious concern about KN-08, saying it is harder to keep an eye on as it can be launched from mobile platforms. In April last year, Adm. William Gortney ... said the North is believed to be capable of miniaturizing nuclear warheads to put on the KN-08 missile and fire it at the U.S. mainland." ...

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## Iran to Strengthen Missile Program: Army Chief

Reuters | February 4

IRAN WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP ITS MISSILE PROGRAM, AND IT should not be considered a threat to neighboring and friendly countries, the semi-official Fars News Agency quoted the head of the army as saying on Thursday.

Under a deal reached between Iran and six major powers in 2015, most international sanctions imposed on Iran due to its nuclear program were lifted last month. However, sanctions imposed on its missile program were not lifted.

According to a July 20 United Nations Security Council resolution endorsing the deal, Iran is still "called upon" to refrain from work on ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons for up to eight years.

In October, Iran violated a United Nations ban by testing a precision-guided ballistic missile, prompting a U.S. threat to impose more sanctions. In December, President Hassan Rouhani ordered Iran's missile program to be expanded.

"Iran's missile capability and its missile program will become stronger. We do not pay attention and do not implement resolutions against Iran, and this is not a violation of the nuclear deal," Fars quoted commander in chief Ataollah Salehi as saying. ...

"Our missile program is not a threat against our friends, but it is a threat against our enemies. Israel should understand what it means," Salehi said. ...

## Palestinians Stepping Up Statehood Bid, Israel's UN Envoy Warns

Times of Israel | February 4

JERUSALEM IS BRACING FOR A SERIES OF PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD initiatives in various international forums, including resolutions at the United Nations Security Council, Israel's ambassador to the UN Danny Danon said Thursday.

"The Palestinians are increasing their involvement and activity in the international arena in a bid to internationalize the conflict," he told the *Times of Israel*. There are several initiatives calling for the creation of a Palestinian state circulating among UN diplomats, and while they recently received less exposure due to

the world's focus on fighting the Islamic State terror group, these resolutions are anything but forgotten, he indicated. ...

Last year, both France and New Zealand toyed with the idea of proposing UN Security Council resolutions to advance the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Paris's bid would call for an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the creation of a Palestinian state there within a few years. ...

Rather than accept the Palestinians' unilateral moves, Danon called on the international community to issue "clear and

uncompromising” calls on [the Palestinian Authority] to stop incitement against Jews and Israelis. “I believe that halting

incitement will lead to a decrease in the violence in the area. Then it’ll be possible to call for renewed [peace] negotiations.” ...

## **Obama Is Pressed to Open Military Front Against ISIS in Libya** **New York Times | February 4**

### **WE TALKED ABOUT THIS**



**P**RESIDENT OBAMA IS BEING PRESSED BY SOME OF HIS TOP NATIONAL security aides to approve the use of American military power in Libya to open up another front against the Islamic State.

But Mr. Obama, wary of embarking on an intervention in another strife-torn country, has told his aides to redouble their efforts to help form a unity government in Libya ....

... “The White House just has to decide,” said one senior State Department official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. “The case has been laid out by virtually every department.”

The number of Islamic State fighters in Libya, Pentagon officials said this week, has grown to between 5,000 and 6,500—more than double the estimate government analysts disclosed last fall. Rather than travel to Iraq or Syria, many new Islamic State recruits from across North Africa have remained in Libya, in militant strongholds along more than 150 miles of Mediterranean coastline near Surt, these officials said.

The top leadership of the Islamic State in Syria has sent half a dozen top lieutenants to Libya to help organize what Western officials consider the most dangerous of the group’s eight global affiliates. ...

Any military action would be coordinated with European

allies, officials said. ...

A dozen American and European military, intelligence and counterterrorism officials said in interviews that they had little doubt that the Islamic State in Libya posed an ominous threat.

“You could see a very large holding, an area that is effectively governed by ISIS in Libya, and Libya’s proximity to serve as a gateway into southern Europe,” Representative Adam B. Schiff of California, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said this week in calling for military strikes against Islamic State leaders. ...

“The last thing in the world you want is a false caliphate with access to billions of dollars of oil revenue,” [U.S. Secretary of State John] Kerry said. ...

Options under discussion include sending Italian and other European troops to Libya to establish a local stabilization force and reviving a Pentagon plan to train Libyan counterterrorism troops. ...

**“The chaos in Libya makes it easy pickings for outside powers, particularly those with vested Islamist aspirations in the region, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran.”**

**“Is Libya ‘a Thousand Times Worse?’” theTrumpet.com, June 12, 2014**

## **Report: Palestinian Authority Arrests Five Pro-Iran Operatives in West Bank** **Jerusalem Post | February 3**

**P**ALESTINIAN AUTHORITY SECURITY FORCES HAVE RECENTLY arrested five pro-Iranian operatives in Bethlehem planning to establish a foothold in the West Bank and carry out attacks against Israel, Israel Radio cited Palestinian security forces as saying.

According to the sources, the five members of the a-Sabrin organization had operated in the Gaza Strip over the past years before being arrested two weeks ago after leaving the coastal Palestinian enclave.

The operatives working under Iranian orders had reportedly received funding in Gaza and were instructed to carry out terror attacks. ...

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has previously warned that Iran is increasing its efforts to deepen its terrorist activities in the West Bank.

While Hamas and the Islamic Republic have faced strained ties since 2011 over their backing of opposing sides in the Syrian civil war, other Iranian proxy groups have recently been caught

attempting to set up operations in the West Bank. ...

Hezbollah was reportedly expected to start mediating soon between Hamas and Iran in order to reconcile between both parties and bring Hamas, which is financed currently by the Gulf states, back into Tehran’s fold.

London-based *Asharq al-Awsat* reported in January that the new mediation comes after Iran failed in its previous attempts to convince Hamas to announce its support for Iran in the Islamic Republic’s battle with Saudi Arabia for regional supremacy, in exchange for Iranian financial aid.

**“Zechariah [14:1-5] prophesies of a violent takeover of half of Jerusalem led by the Palestinians, which is why it is likely that Hamas will eventually grab hold of the West Bank. Its leadership there will most likely be needed to orchestrate an attempt of the takeover of East Jerusalem.”**

**“Hamas’s Plot to Take Over Israel’s West Bank,”**  
**theTrumpet.com, Aug. 25, 2014**

# Trumpet Hour

GERMANY'S PUTIN VISIT, JAPAN'S CONSTITUTION, BRITAIN'S EU DEAL, AMERICA'S SOCIALIST WIN AND MORE | FEBRUARY 5

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## Holy Roman Empire Newspaper Headline

Gerald Flurry,  
The Key of David | February 5

Few people know Charlemagne's legacy, but Europe will follow in his footsteps one last time.



## David Cameron's EU Deal Will Not Change Any Minds. Most People Have Already Decided

Telegraph | February 5

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



THE SHORT ANSWER IS "NO," BECAUSE THE REFERENDUM QUESTION is not whether people believe David Cameron's claim to have won a victory in Brussels. It is, at risk of stating the obvious, about whether the UK should stay in or leave the European Union.

The prime minister's renegotiation of the EU's influence on Britain was intended to win support from Tory M.P.s for his own default position, to remain in the EU. This is not a positive commitment to Britain having a future in Europe but an easier policy for him to implement than steering Britain's EU exit, the first choice of a hard core of his M.P.s and of Tory voters. ...

If the referendum is decided by people who do or do not want to follow David Cameron's lead, then the majority will vote to leave, since only 36 percent backed his reelection as prime minister at the general election last May. ...

The voters who will tip the balance in the referendum expected in June are those who feel they have a civic duty to vote but not to understand how European institutions work. In such circumstances, they can rely on long-held views about Europe, whether formed by watching wartime movies on television or working for a firm that trades heavily with other member states. ...

## Seehofer in Moscow: Not in Merkel's Interest

Deutsche Welle | February 5

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



SELDOM HAVE RELATIONS BETWEEN BERLIN AND MOSCOW BEEN in such a poor state as they are now. Even Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Angela Merkel's man for diplomacy, cannot shift opinions in the Russian capital. And now, in the middle of this diplomatic deep freeze, Horst Seehofer ... will honor Kremlin boss Vladimir Putin with a visit on Thursday. Seehofer, of all people—Merkel's biggest refugee-policy critic. A man that loves to polarize. The

wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time? ...

Seehofer is Merkel's most dangerous critic. For months he has been bombarding the chancellor with ultimatums. He finds the chancellor's refugee policy to be utterly flawed, not just in the details, but fundamentally. He may be flying to meet Putin as the state premier of Bavaria, but he will be received in Moscow as a representative of one of Germany's three governing parties. ...



Seehofer's Moscow visit is taking place at a moment in which the Kremlin is on the offensive in its attempt to influence public opinion in Germany. ... Russia ... is pushing a form of politics that endangers the willingness of Germans to accept refugees, says CDU [Christian Democratic Union] politician Roderich Kiesewetter. Against this backdrop, Seehofer's upcoming trip to Moscow is a mistake.

The CSU [Christian Social Union] was already calling for closer cooperation with Moscow when the Syrian crisis began. In September, Seehofer exclaimed that the situation in Syria could not be brought under control without Putin's help. ...

## **Value Shoppers**

**Economist | January 30**

**E**UROPE PROMISED A PRINCIPLED FOREIGN POLICY. NOW IT IS DESPERATE for quick deals.

Nothing excites the febrile intellects of Brussels more than analyzing the theoretical underpinnings of European foreign policy. ... When the EU signed a German-inspired deal with Turkey to help stem the flow of refugees late last year, none of this mattered a jot. ... It was one of the most important European foreign-policy initiatives in years, but there was not a sniff of strategy to it. It reeked of desperation.

Turkey-watchers in Europe and liberals inside Turkey were united in outrage. The Europeans were averting their gaze as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's president, was locking up journalists, harassing the opposition, and prosecuting a bloody war against unruly Kurds—in an official EU candidate country, no less. The European Commission even postponed publication of its highly critical annual report on Turkey's membership bid while Mr. Erdoğan's party campaigned in national elections.

The deal seemed emblematic of a "realist" turn in European foreign policy. Ideas such as slashing aid to countries that

The Russian strongman and the Bavarian have a common interest though: The end of the EU's economic sanctions against Russia. ...

The CSU's brand of foreign policy has always had something unique about it. CSU grandees Franz-Josef Strauss and Edmund Stoiber were always good for political bombshells on the domestic front. Strauss's "foreign policy on our own terms" was legendary. ... Whether the emotional Seehofer is able to stand up to Putin's persuasiveness will determine if the trip simply becomes a historical footnote—or further strains the fragile coalition in Berlin.

refuse to accept the return of failed asylum seekers are doing the rounds. Officials in international-development agencies tear their hair out as carefully nurtured relationships in Africa are tossed aside to make way for quick-and-dirty deals to ship back rejected migrants. ...

[T]o borrow from the late American neoconservative Irving Kristol, Europeans have started to resemble liberals mugged by reality. It is easy to bleat about human rights when you are living in a peaceful, postmodern paradise; less so when you have millions of illegal migrants barging through your back door. ...

Europe's vulnerabilities are on full display. Some future Qadhafi will be alert to the concessions he might win by threatening to unleash hordes of migrants upon European shores. Finland and Norway fear that [Russian President] Vladimir Putin may decide to do precisely that by waving through a host of Syrians and Afghans. As for Turkey, had the Europeans woken up to the coming danger last spring, they might not have found themselves compromising their values so grubbily in the autumn. ...

## **The War in Ukraine Is Back—So Why Won't Anyone Say So?**

**Pierre Vaux, Daily Beast | February 3**

**R**USSIA'S DIRTY WAR IN UKRAINE IS FAR FROM FROZEN, AND despite the deteriorating situation, the West appears keen to turn a blind eye.

While the fighting in southeast Ukraine has rumbled on incessantly throughout the winter, inducing conflict fatigue and a drop in media coverage, the last weeks have seen a marked spike in the number of attacks.

Ukrainian officials are reporting up to 71 attacks a day, with most of the fighting concentrated around the separatist-held cities of Donetsk and Gorlovka, as well as the countryside east of the Azov port city of Mariupol.

Both sides accuse each other of daily using heavy mortars, which were supposed to have been withdrawn ... over a year ago in accordance with the first Minsk agreement. ...

January 26 and 27 saw a multitude of reports from Donetsk residents on social media of intense fighting in the north of the city, where the front line runs alongside the ruins of the airport and the suburbs of Peski and Avdeyevka. ...

Furthermore, over the last few days, we have seen the targeting of frontier checkpoints, which allow civilians to enter and leave separatist-held territory, by Russian-backed fighters, raising the possibility that the government may be forced to close these vital passages to avoid casualties.

The January 13 call, put forth by the new Russian representative at the Minsk peace talks, Boris Gryzlov, for an immediate, total ceasefire has clearly amounted to nothing. ...

Yet on January 22, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said that sanctions on Russia could be lifted within "these next months" if the Minsk agreements were implemented in full.

Leaving aside the fact that sanctions were first introduced in response to Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea—a completely separate issue on which there is not even a hint of progress, Kerry's suggestion that Minsk could be fully realized in the space of a few months is absurd. ...

Kerry's hint at rapprochement is part of a wider trend.

The German and Finnish governments continue to pursue the

Nord Stream 2 pipeline project with the Russian state gas monopoly Gazprom, a policy that flies in the face of moves to achieve European energy independence and is opposed by Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic states. ...

The reason for both Kerry and May's soft approach to Russia derives from Western hopes that Putin will be of assistance in Syria ....

But this means turning a blind eye not only to the killing of

Litvinenko, but Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of the Donbass for the sake of a hope that Putin may be turned to work with the West on Syria. If Russia can, with impunity, use radioactive polonium to murder a British citizen in London or shoot down a passenger airliner over Ukraine, then how can we collaborate on "serious crime" or "aviation security"?

The hope here is profoundly misplaced. ...

## **Over 80 Percent of Germans Think Merkel Has Lost Control of Refugee Crisis**

**Damien Sharkey, Newsweek | February 4**

**T**HE MAJORITY OF GERMANS BELIEVE THAT CHANCELLOR ANGELA Merkel's government has lost control of the country's refugee situation, while the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has achieved its highest rating, according to a poll by public broadcaster ARD.

Popular support for Merkel, meanwhile, has collapsed to its lowest level in almost five years as the German system has taken in over 1.1 million migrants since the start of 2015 ....

According to the poll, which was conducted earlier this week, only 46 percent of Germans supported Merkel—a drop from 75 percent in April .... Meanwhile, 81 percent said they felt Germany's federal government was "not in control" of the migrant crisis.

The anti-immigrant AfD also ranked as the third most popular party in the country .... The AfD would win 12 percent of the vote if the election were held this weekend ....

## **ASIA**

## **Japan Doubles Its Fighter Jet Numbers to Defend Islands Claimed by China**

**Telegraph | February 1**

**J**APAN HAS DOUBLED THE NUMBER OF F-15 FIGHTER JETS deployed to its southernmost territory close to islands disputed with Beijing in the East China Sea.

Japan's Air Self-Defense Force has increased the size of its fleet of F-15 fighter jets ... to a total of about 40 ....

... Kenji Wakamiya, the deputy defense minister, was quoted by Jiji Press as saying: "This is a very front line of national defense."

Tensions have been steadily rising in the region in recent years, with regular clashes between Japan and China over the disputed ownership of Tokyo-controlled islands in the East China

Sea—known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China. ...

The incursions have tainted relations between Tokyo and Beijing, with lingering memories of Japan's wartime aggressions plus the current Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's constitutional revisions causing further strain.

Japan's deployment of additional fighter jets came just days after the U.S. sent a warship within 12 nautical miles of Triton Island in the South China Sea, also claimed by Beijing, in a criticism of China's increasingly aggressive maritime claims.

## **Abe Explicit in Call for Amendment to Constitution's Article 9**

**Japan Times | February 3**

### **WE TALKED ABOUT THIS**



**P**RIME MINISTER SHINZO ABE ON WEDNESDAY CALLED FOR CHANGING the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution, saying there is a contradiction between the existence of the Self-Defense Force (SDF) and a ban on Japan maintaining armed forces.

The Constitution's second paragraph says: "Land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained."

Abe called for amending this text, citing a draft revised Constitution tabled by his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in April 2012.

Abe told the House of Representatives Budget Committee that the Constitution was created during the U.S. Occupation after

World War II and that "some parts do not fit into the current period."

"There is the view that (Japan should) address the situation in which 70 percent of Constitutional scholars suspect the SDF is in violation of the Constitution," he said.

"Given the view that we should change this with our own hands, the LDP has announced a draft revised Constitution."

The U.S.-drafted Constitution has remained unaltered since its promulgation in November 1946.

Abe said public support for the SDF is "unshakable" due to the activities of troops at home and overseas since the force's inception more than 60 years ago.

The LDP's draft "specifies that Japan possesses the right to self-defense and stipulates that an organization will be set up for self-defense," he said. ...

Under Article 96 of the Constitution, revisions to the Constitution can be proposed by two thirds of the members of each chamber of the Diet and must be approved by a majority of people in a referendum.

At present, the LDP and its coalition partner, the Komeito party, have a two-thirds majority in the Lower House and a majority in the House of Councilors. ...

**"Japan's shift away from pacifism and toward becoming a full-fledged military power has long been a focus of the *Trumpet* as well as our forerunner, the *Plain Truth*. ... The *Trumpet* reports on Japanese efforts toward remilitarization because each is one small step closer to that 200 million-man army. Each is a step nearer to that unprecedentedly violent conflict. Many Bible passages show that it will be the bloodiest, most destructive conflict in history. Japan's march toward militarization points to a dark future."**

*"Why We Watch Japan's March Toward Militarism,"  
Trumpet, August 2015*

## **After Four Months, Russia's Campaign in Syria Is Proving Successful for Moscow**

**Washington Post | February 3**

**F**OUR MONTHS AFTER LAUNCHING AIRSTRIKES IN SYRIA, THE Kremlin is confident that Moscow's largest overseas campaign since the end of the Soviet Union is paying off.

Under the banner of fighting international terrorism, President Vladimir Putin has reversed the fortunes of forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad, which were rapidly losing ground last year to moderate and Islamist rebel forces in the country's five-year-old crisis. Government forces are now on the offensive, and last week, they scored their most significant victory yet, seizing the strategic town of Sheikh Miskeen from rebels who are backed by a U.S.-led coalition.

According to analysts and officials here, the Russian government believes it has won those dividends at a relatively low cost to the country's budget, with minimal loss of soldiers' lives and with largely supportive public opinion.

"The operation is considered here to be quite successful," said Evgeny Buzhinsky, a retired lieutenant general and senior vice president of the Russian Center for Policy Studies in Moscow. It could probably continue for one year or longer, he said, "but it will depend on the success on the ground." ...

President Obama warned last year that Russia was entering a "quagmire" reminiscent of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan,

and it is unclear when Moscow could declare victory and whether it has an exit strategy.

But as Assad's forces push forward and as diplomatic talks in Geneva broke off in recriminations Wednesday after just two days, there is little pressure right now on the Kremlin to pull back. ...

"The Russian intervention already accomplished the biggest thing it could, which was ensuring the cohesion and stability of the Syrian regime," said Steven Simon, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute ....

Although questions remain about the potential of the Syrian Army and its ability to take back land, the intervention has had an outsize influence on negotiations. ...

**"Putin's power play in Syria will not last but, in fact, will be short-lived. According to a prophecy found in Psalm 83, the Syrian people won't look to Russia as an ally, nor to Iran. Ultimately they will look to a German-led Europe! That is when you will really begin to see power exerted over the Middle East."**

*"Russia Outmaneuvers the United States in Syria,"  
Trumpet, November-December 2015*

## **Taiwan Elections: An Opportunity for Japan?**

**Diplomat | January 29**

**I**N EAST ASIA, FEW THINGS HAPPEN OUTSIDE OF CHINA'S SHADOW. The recently concluded presidential election in Taiwan was no exception, although its outcome was far from what Beijing had wanted.

By electing a new president with pro-independence inclinations, Taiwan has sent an unmistakable message to China: While it does need to do business with China, it wants to keep the latter at arm's length and rejects any direct or indirect attempt at reunification.

"China" as usual is on everyone's mind in the wake of Tsai Ing-wen's victory. But in comparison to past major political upheavals in Taiwan, this election appears to be bringing into the geopolitical picture of the Strait of Taiwan a new but potentially significant regional player: Japan.

Mindful of its delicate relations with China, official circles in Japan had, since its diplomatic recognition of Communist China in

1972, painstakingly shied away from publicly showing any interest in the politics of what China considers its own "renegade province."

But something has changed. Immediately following confirmation of Tsai's electoral victory, Tokyo shed its customary reserve and reacted with uncharacteristically candid enthusiasm, with both Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida publicly welcoming the victory of the pro-independence candidate, calling Taiwan "a longtime friend and a model of democracy," and voicing hope for stronger ties with the island under its new leadership.

This unprecedentedly unapologetic enthusiasm in Tokyo for Taiwan's new "anti-China" regime was not lost on Beijing, which summoned the Japanese ambassador for a briefing on China's position on Taiwan and for a reminder of the sacrosanct "one China" principle.

Tokyo's new proactive attitude on the sensitive Taiwan issue



can be linked to the changing geopolitical situation in the East China Sea and South China Sea, as well as with Taiwan's own subtle transformation in its attitude toward China. ...

Taiwan is considered one of the most "Japan-friendly" countries in the world, following and despite a 50-year Japanese colonial rule that ended in 1945. This Japanese colonial rule, despite its share of atrocities, discrimination, and other negative aspects, also helped modernize the island with infrastructure, education and economic systems, all of which helped to leave Japan with a rather positive image among the local population. ...

[T]he growing pro-China inclination shown by the outgoing Ma Ying-jeou administration these past eight years has been most unsettling for Tokyo, especially in a period of high tensions between Japan and China.

Several of Ma's actions have led the Abe administration in Tokyo to start questioning Taipei's "Japan-friendliness." ...

Now, with the Democratic Progressive Party's Tsai replacing the Nationalist Ma administration, Japan is confident that the new government will move away from China in favor of Japan ....

Taiwan's expected shift away from China in the coming years coincides with a new diplomatic and strategic reemergence for Japan under Abe's leadership since 2012.

It remains to be seen whether the new Taiwan will become an added positive element for Abe's ambition of exploiting this new diplomatic and strategic pro-activism to form a ring of democracies encircling and containing Communist China. Besides, Japan hopes, Beijing's attention will be so focused on Taiwan in the coming years that this may shift Chinese assertiveness away from the explosive areas around Senkaku/Diaoyu.

Viewed from Tokyo, Japan can only gain from what China loses in Taiwan.

### **Tokyo Orders SDF to Shoot Down North Korean Missile if Threat to Japan** **Japan Times | February 3**

**J**APAN ON WEDNESDAY CONDEMNED PYONGYANG'S PLAN TO launch a space rocket, calling it a thinly disguised test of a long-distance ballistic missile.

The government ordered Aegis ballistic missile defense warships of the Maritime Self-Defense Force and land-based Patriot PAC-3 rocket units to respond should projections show components falling in Japanese territory.

"This will effectively mean the firing of a ballistic missile. It would be a clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and a grave, provocative act against the security of our country," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told a Lower House session Wednesday. ...

On Tuesday night, North Korea notified the International

Maritime Organization that it plans to send a "satellite" into orbit between February 8 and 25. It said the launch will take place on one of those days between 7:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Japan time.

Pyongyang conducted a fourth nuclear test on January 6. The planned launch is widely seen as both a test and a demonstration of its advances in rocketry. ...

Japan has already deployed Aegis destroyers equipped with the SM-3 missile system at sea and Patriot PAC-3 air-defense units of the Ground Self-Defense Force on land. Both systems are designed to intercept ballistic missiles. ...

Urging Pyongyang to drop its plan, the government in Seoul said the move would be a serious breach of UN resolutions and a "direct challenge" to the international community. ...

## **TW IN BRIEF**

**Negative interest in Japan:** The Bank of Japan (BOJ) on January 29 introduced a negative interest-rate policy for the first time, seeking to shore up a stumbling recovery in the world's third-largest economy. The surprise move rattled stock market investors, with the Nikkei 225 Index swinging between gains and losses after the announcement. It closed 2.8 percent higher. The BOJ hopes that

negative interest rates will encourage commercial banks to lend more, rather than keeping cash at the BOJ, and stimulate investment and growth. The BOJ said in a statement that Japan's economy is still recovering, but risks from volatile global financial markets could undermine confidence and slow progress out of deflation and toward the central bank's 2 percent inflation target.

## **AFRICA/LATIN AMERICA**

### **Somalia Plane Incident Investigators Find Explosive Residue** **Associated Press | February 4**

**T**HE HEAD OF THE AIRLINE WHOSE JETLINER WAS DAMAGED IN AN explosion shortly after takeoff from Somalia said Thursday that investigators have found what appears to be residue from explosives, though he cautioned that the findings were inconclusive.

Still, the preliminary discovery lends weight to the possibility

that a bomb was to blame for the blast that tore through the Airbus 321 shortly after takeoff from the Somali capital Mogadishu.

"There's a residue, they're saying, of explosives. ... There's a trace," Daallo Airlines CEO Mohammed Ibrahim Yassin said during an interview with the Associated Press at the carrier's

corporate office in Dubai. “But that cannot really make 100 percent that it’s a bomb,” he added, saying that he expects initial findings to be released in a matter of days. ...

No group has claimed responsibility for the blast. Somalia faces an insurgency from the Islamic extremist group al Shabaab,

which has carried out deadly attacks in Somalia and neighboring countries. ...

**RELATED:** [“WHY AL SHABAAB WARRANTS YOUR ATTENTION”](#)

## TW IN BRIEF

**World’s 50 most-dangerous cities revealed:** The 50 most-dangerous cities in the world have been revealed by the Mexico Citizens Council for Public Security. Venezuelan capital Caracas came out to be number one, with 119.87 homicides for every 100,000 residents in 2015. Latin America dominated the ranking, with 41 of its cities being listed. An astonishing 21 of them are in Brazil. Drug trafficking, gang wars, political instability, corruption and poverty are to blame for the high homicide rates across the region. While the majority of these dangerous cities are in developing or semi-developed countries, four U.S. cities feature on the list: Detroit, Baltimore, St. Louis and New Orleans.

The list did not take into account war zones or places with fewer than 300,000 residents.

**Radical Islam strikes Nigeria:** Eighty-six people including children were killed in an attack by Boko Haram extremists on a village in the northeast of Nigeria. A witness told the Associated Press that the militants carried out a four-hour-long attack on Saturday night. More people were killed later when three female suicide bombers struck at people who fled to a neighboring village, according to a soldier at the scene. Nigeria’s six-year Islamic uprising has killed about 20,000 people and driven 2.5 million from their homes.

## ANGLO-AMERICA



### The Way of Peace

Stephen Flurry,

Trumpet Daily | February 5

There is a way—but man has rejected that way.

[Follow Stephen Flurry](#)



## T Oregon Standoff Spotlights Growing Divide on Issue of Federal Law Enforcement

Andrew Müller | February 4

FOR OVER A MONTH, A TENSE STANDOFF BETWEEN ARMED MILITIA members and federal law enforcement officers has been going on at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. This standoff started as a peaceful rally in support of two ranchers who were charged with terrorism by federal prosecutors and sentenced to five years in prison after fires set on their own property spread to the nearby wildlife refuge. It escalated as a small group of about 20 armed militia members split off from the rally and occupied the wildlife refuge’s headquarters building.

Led by Ammon Bundy, this group of militiamen calls itself the Citizens for Constitutional Freedom. The group originally pledged to occupy the building until federal authorities released the two ranchers from prison and turned over control of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge to Harney County.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and Oregon State Police surrounded the occupied building, but no one was hurt. It was

not until January 26, when Bundy and eight others left the refuge to participate in a local community meeting, that the first fatality in this standoff occurred. When FBI agents tried to pull over the two vehicles being driven out of the wildlife refuge, one of the Oregon protesters, LaVoy Finicum, tried to evade arrest. In the commotion that ensued, Finicum was shot dead and Bundy’s brother Ryan was wounded in the arm.

Some journalists are comparing the Oregon standoff to the Black Lives Matter movement and the Ferguson riots. One editorial from the *Washington Post* decries a double standard and claims that the police would have killed the Oregon protesters if they had been black, Hispanic or Muslim. Other journalists take the angle that the Oregon militiamen and the Ferguson riots have much in common and should be working together against police abuse.

Both positions fail to note that the Oregon militiamen and the Black Lives Matter protesters are taking extreme opposite

positions on whether American law enforcement should be localized or federalized.

The Bundy family and the Oregon militiamen take the position that all federal land ownership and all federal policing operations are unconstitutional. They are calling for the return of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge to the control of the local populace, and for the expulsion of all federal police from Harney County. In place of these federal officials, Cliven Bundy, father of Ammon and Ryan, is asking the Harney County sheriff to place a guard post of local police at the wildlife refuge.

Such calls for the localization of American law enforcement operations are completely at odds with the demands of many in the Black Lives Matter movement. Although Black Lives Matter is a grassroots movement with a plethora of different ideas, the main demand of its activists seems to be greater federal oversight of allegedly racist local police forces. Just after the Baltimore riots over the death of Freddie Gray last year, civil rights activist Al Sharpton called on the United States Department of Justice to step in and “take over policing in this country” so that racist

officers can be held accountable. “We’re going to have to fight states’ rights in terms of closing down police cases,” he said.

As law and order break down in American society, the citizens of the U.S. are finding themselves caught in between armed anti-federal militiamen advocating the localization of all police forces and violent ethnic minorities demanding the federalization of all police forces.

**“America’s law enforcement is under attack. On one side, people in communities are developing a mistrustful, hostile, antagonistic attitude, yelling at police, assaulting and even killing officers in some cases. Police are pulling back from doing their jobs for fear of attack, or losing their jobs or going to prison for doing anything that could be perceived as racist. On the other, the federal government is undermining local law enforcement and stripping it of power in an effort to centralize policing power on the federal level.”**

Gerald Flurry, “Police Under Attack,” *Trumpet*, August 2015

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## The Big Winner of the 2016 Race: Democratic Socialism

Elizebeth Bruenig, *New Republic* | February 3

### WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



ON MONDAY NIGHT, SEN. BERNIE SANDERS OF VERMONT TESTED out his “radical idea”—a vision of American democratic socialism—with real American voters in Iowa. Numerically, the race was a dead heat, with Clinton barely inching ahead of Sanders. It was not, in other words, the kind of explosive surge that might produce its own groundswell of enthusiasm, a victory begetting more victories. But for a candidate who had been expected to be a non-threatening bit-player in the Democratic primary, the achievement was enormous. And for Americans hoping to see a way forward for democratic socialism on their home turf, it was even bigger.

“I think it’s overwhelmingly positive,” David Duhalde, deputy director of Democratic Socialists of America, told the *New Republic* of Sanders’s performance. “People were pleasantly surprised at how well Bernie did. I think just the tie is a victory in itself, and it just shows how much he overcame with pretty much just volunteers, a handful of union endorsements, and a really, really good message that really resonated with people.” ...

But Sanders’s candidacy has shifted the public perception of socialism—at least notional socialism—somewhat. “He’s made it easier to identify as a socialist, and for people to organize as

socialists,” Duhalde said. “Our new membership rates have doubled since he’s been running. So people are willing not just to identify as socialists, but to actually make that financial commitment.”

Part of Sanders’s success campaigning under the socialist banner likely arises from the base he has managed to reach: namely younger, further-left, and lower-income voters. Exit polls from Monday night’s Iowa caucuses found that Sanders won 84 percent of voters between the ages of 17 and 29 ....

Among voters who felt that income inequality is the most important issue facing the country, Sanders claimed 61 percent of the vote. ...

**“The radical left has gained control of the government and much of the country. Where did the ideas of America’s leaders today come from? From our educational institutions. ... They aim to destroy the system, because they can’t build another one until that happens.”**

Gerald Flurry, “The Roots of America’s Dangerous Turn Left,” *Trumpet*, January 2016

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## Border Agent: 'We Might as Well Abolish Our Immigration Laws Altogether'

Washington Examiner | February 4

**I**N A SHOCKING REVERSAL OF POLICY, U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER Protection agents are being told to release illegal immigrants and no longer order them to appear at deportation hearings, essentially a license to stay in the United States, a key agent testified Thursday.

What's more, the stand-down order includes a requirement that the whereabouts of illegals released are not to be tracked.

"We might as well abolish our immigration laws altogether," suggested agent Brandon Judd ....

Testifying on the two-year border surge of immigrant youths, Judd said the policy shift was prompted by Obama administration "embarrassment" that just over half of illegals ordered to appear in court actually do. ...

The biggest change: Undocumented immigrants are no longer given a "notice to appear" order, because they simply ignore them. Judd said that border agents jokingly refer to the NTAs as "notices to disappear."

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## Number of Undocumented Cubans Entering U.S. Up Sharply in 2015

St. Augustine Record | February 3

**M**ORE THAN 51,000 UNDOCUMENTED CUBANS ENTERED THE United States last year—a dramatic surge over 2014.

Newly released immigration numbers for the final three months of 2015 show that 17,071 Cubans arrived in the U.S. without prior authorization, bringing the calendar year total to 51,011, according to figures from the U.S. Customs and Border

Protection.

That is an 84 percent increase over 2014. ...

The 2015 count does not include more than 20,000 Cubans given official permission annually by the U.S. to immigrate, or those who overstay tourist visas.

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## TW IN BRIEF

**B**ritain approves genetically altering human embryos: British scientists were given the go-ahead by fertility regulators on Monday to genetically modify human embryos. In what is being called "a landmark decision," the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority announced that it had granted a research application to a team of scientists trying to understand the genes that human embryos need to develop successfully. At the moment, it is illegal for the scientists to implant the modified embryos into women. Critics are warning that the decision could be a slippery slope that leads to designer, or genetically modified, babies.

**E**ngland's incredibly uneducated youth: Young people in England have the lowest levels of literacy in the developed world, and graduate with only a negligible understanding of English and math. A new report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development says English teenagers rank number 23 out of the 23 developed nations that were studied. The findings are especially jarring when placed alongside the literacy levels of England's older generations. Those of retirement age ranked among the most literate and educated of all nations.

**U**nited States hits new debt record: The U.S. national debt hit a new record Monday morning. Total federal debt now exceeds \$19 trillion. That figure averages out to over \$58,000 for

each man, woman and child in the United States. The main drivers behind rising debt levels are federal healthcare programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Obamacare. When combined with Social Security and interest payments on preexisting debt, these programs account for 83 percent of projected spending increases over the next decade. Under current government spending estimates, the Congressional Budget Office projects that total federal debt will be over \$26 trillion by the end of the decade.

**U**.S. economy is recovering while use of food stamps soars: About 45.4 million Americans, roughly one seventh of the population, received food stamps last October, which is the most recent month of available data. Bloomberg Business noted that unemployment for that month was at 5 percent. The last time unemployment was at that level was in April 2008. At that time, 28 million Americans used food stamps, and the program cost less than half of what the government paid out last year, according to Bloomberg. Enrollment for food stamps has gotten easier, and people are becoming more reliant and accustomed to using the handouts. The biggest problem, according to researcher Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation, is adults who are able to work but still rely on the handouts. "Clearly there's a group of people who are not in the labor force, and 10 years ago they would have been," he said. "Now they're relying on food stamps."